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DISCOURSES

PREACHED AT

THE TEMPLE CHURCH,

AND ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

DISCOURSES

ON THE

USE AND INTENT OF PROPHECY:

TOGETHER WITH

DISSERTATIONS;

A CHARGE TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF LONDON;

A LETTER ON THE EARTHQUAKES IN MDCCL;

AND

THE TRIAL OF THE WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

BY

THOMAS SHERLOCK, D. D.

LATE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON, AND MASTER OF THE TEMPLE.

A NEW EDITION, IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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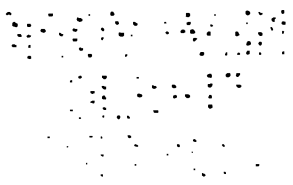

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DISCOURSE LIII.

1 THESSALONIANS i. 9, 10.

For they themſelves ſhew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to ſerve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raiſed from the dead, even Jeſus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

IN the verſe before the text the Apoſtle tells the Theſſalonians, that not only the word of the Lord had ſounded out from them in Macedonia and Achaia, but their faith alſo towards God was ſpread abroad in every place; ſo that there is no occaſion, adds the Apoſtle, for me to ſay any thing of the doctrines delivered by me, and received by you: the thing is well known, and notorious to all the world: *They themſelves ſhew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you.*

It is evident from hence what notion the world entertained of the Chriſtian religion, and the principal doctrines of it, in the earlieſt days. All who had heard of our Apoſtle's teaching knew his buſineſs to be to turn men from idols to ſerve the living God, to give evidence of the reſurrection of

Chriſt Jeſus from the dead, and to eſtabliſh a certain expectation of his coming again with power and glory to judge the world. This common report St. Paul allows to be ſo juſt and adequate an account of his doctrine, as to leave no room to enlarge or correct it: *In every place your faith to God-ward is ſpread abroad; ſo that we need not to ſpeak any thing.*

If we conſider this early account of the Chriſtian religion, ſo univerſally received, and ſo well approved by the Apoſtle, we ſhall find it to conſiſt of two principal parts: the firſt relating to the ſervice owing to the living God; the ſecond to our faith in Chriſt, and our hope and expectation grounded on that faith.

Religion, conſidered under the notion of a ſervice we owe to God, can be no other than natural religion, or true uncorrupted deiſm. This was the old original religion of mankind, but had been ſo corrupted and abuſed, that there was hardly any ſign of it left when our Saviour appeared in the world. However rightly ſome few might think, yet they found themſelves obliged to follow the world, and practiſe with the vulgar. Not many attempted, and none ſucceeded in a reformation of the public religion. No antiquity affords an inſtance of any people, great or ſmall, who ſerved God upon the principles of natural religion. The only general and effectual reformation of the world was brought about by the preaching of the Goſpel; which revived and introduced the true ancient religion of nature, and prepared men for the reception of it; and has, by the additional ſupports of revelation, maintained it

for many ages, and probably will maintain it to the end and conſummation of all things.

Theſe additional ſupports make the ſecond great branch of Chriſtian doctrine: they are revived upon the authority of revelation, and ſtand upon the evidence of external proofs. That we ought to turn from idols, and ſerve the living God; that we ought to ſerve him in holineſs and purity, in conforming ourſelves to the example of his juſtice, equity, and goodneſs, are truths which every man may feel to be ſuch, who has any reaſon or natural feeling about him: but that we have been delivered from the wrath to come by Jeſus the Son of God; that God raiſed him from the dead, and hath appointed him to be judge both of the dead and of the living, are articles which no man's reaſon can ſuggeſt; which, when ſuggeſted, reaſon cannot receive upon any internal evidence, but muſt take them upon an authority ſufficiently confirmed and eſtabliſhed upon external evidence.

This diſtinction, conſtantly attended to, will go a great way in ſhewing us the true temper and genius of the Chriſtian religion, and the end propoſed by its divine author. Conſider the Goſpel in its precepts and morality; and is there any doctrine advanced, any duty required, but what reaſon muſt admit and approve, or which it can reject without doing violence to itſelf? Is there, in this reſpect, any objection againſt the Chriſtian religion, but what is and muſt be equally an objection againſt all natural religion? Conſider the Goſpel with reſpect to its new doctrines, its articles of belief: you will find them all deſigned to ſupport and encourage

true religion, and to preſerve the world from falling again into that confuſion of idolatry and ſuperſtition, which for many ages held it in darkneſs. This might be ſhewn in the ſeveral particulars of the Goſpel diſpenſation: but I ſhall confine myſelf to thoſe ſpecified in the text.

St. Paul teaches us *to wait for the Son of God from heaven, whom he raiſed from the dead, even Jeſus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

To wait for the Son of God from heaven, ſignifies to continue with patience and well-doing, in expectation of the coming of our Saviour and Judge; which ſenſe is completely expreſſed, Philip. iii. *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk ſo, as you have us for an enſample—for our converſation is in heaven; from whence alſo we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things unto himſelf.*

The expectation of Chriſt coming to judge the world is peculiar to Chriſtians; and it is ſupported by the belief of the reſurrection of Chriſt, that great and main point of faith, which the Apoſtles were commiſſioned to teach and eſtabliſh in the church of God: for which reaſon, when an Apoſtle was to be choſen in the room of Judas, the qualification required in the perſon to ſucceed was, that he ſhould be one capable of bearing teſtimony of the reſurrection of Chriſt. Take the account in St. Peter's own words: *Of theſe men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out amongſt us, beginning from the baptiſm of John,*

unto that ſame day that he was taken up from us, muſt one be ordained to be a witneſs with us of his reſurrection, Acts i. 21, 22. And, in the next chapter, St. Peter, vindicating to the Jews the miraculous gift of tongues beſtowed on the day of Pentecoſt, renders this account of the work and miniſtry of the apoſtleſhip: *Ye men of Iſrael, hear theſe words; Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and ſigns, which God did, by him, in the midſt of you—Him, being delivered by the determinate counſel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and ſlain*, ver 22, 23. *This Jeſus hath God raiſed up, whereof we all are witneſſes*, ver. 32. To the ſame purpoſe again, in the third chapter, *Ye denied the Holy One and the Juſt, and deſired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raiſed from the dead; whereof we are witneſſes*, ver. 14, 15. In the fourth chapter an account is given us of the courage and boldneſs of the Apoſtles in preaching Chriſt to the rulers, and of the ſucceſs of their miniſtry among the people: the ſum of it we have in theſe words: *With great power gave the Apoſtles witneſs of the reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus; and great grace was upon them all*, ver. 33. In the fifth chapter the Apoſtles are called again before the council: the high prieſt charges them with diſobeying the injunctions given them not to preach in Chriſt's name: St. Peter and the reſt anſwer him and the council, by opening to them the commiſſion and authority by which they acted, and the doctrine which they taught: *We ought*, ſay they, *to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raiſed*

up Jeſus, whom ye ſlew and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Iſrael, and forgiveneſs of ſins. And we are his witneſſes of theſe things; and ſo is alſo the Holy Ghoſt, whom God hath given to them that obey him, ver. 29, 30, 31, 32. From theſe paſſages of Scripture, taken together, it plainly appears how much the Chriſtian religion, conſidered as a diſtinct ſyſtem from natural religion, depends upon the belief of the reſurrection of Chriſt. The Apoſtles were ordained to be witneſſes of this article: this article is the foundation upon which they build all the hopes and expectations peculiar to Chriſtians: if they preach repentance to Iſrael and forgiveneſs of ſins, it is in his name, whom God raiſed from the dead: if they turn to the Gentiles with offers of peace and reconciliation, it is ſtill in his name, whom God raiſed from the dead, and ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead.

When St. Paul preached at Athens, they thought him an introducer of ſome new deities, he talked ſo much of *Jeſus and the reſurrection*, Acts xvii. 18. Which doctrine of a reſurrection he afterwards fully expounded to them, together with the conſequents belonging to it: *Now*, ſays the Apoſtle, *God commandeth all men every where to repent, becauſe he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead*, ver. 30, 31. This paſſage of St. Paul gives a very plain account of the concern to propagate and eſtabliſh the article of Chriſt's reſurrection. The reſurrection of Chriſt was deſigned

to be an evidence and aſſurance to the world of God's intention to judge the world in righteouſneſs. This new article was introduced to be a new evidence of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, and to ſupport the ſinner's hopes of pardon and reconciliation through the promiſes of Chriſt, whom God had appointed to be his judge.

You ſee then the uſe of this great article of Chriſtian faith. Let us conſider now whether we are beholden to the Goſpel, and how much, for this new evidence of a life to come; and what there is in this article, and the doctrines grounded upon it, that any ſober Deiſt, or profeſſor of natural religion, can juſtly blame.

Natural religion pretends to ſupport itſelf upon the expectation of future rewards and puniſhments: it conſiders God as governor and judge of the world. Chriſtian religion ſtands upon the ſame foundation, and admits for genuine all theſe hopes and fears of nature. Thus far there is no difference. The queſtion is, which brings the beſt proof, and moſt fitted to perſuade the world of this great truth? Natural religion appeals to conſcience, and that ſenſe which all men have of their being accountable for their actions. The Chriſtian religion embraces all this evidence, and whatever elſe can be ſuggeſted by reaſon to render the hopes of futurity probable, or certain: to theſe evidences it adds the expreſs teſtimony and aſſurance of God given to mankind in the reſurrection of his beloved Son Chriſt Jeſus.

But what need, you will ſay, of this new evidence? Were not the arguments, which natural re-

ligion affords, ſufficient to ſupport the belief and expectation of a future judgment? If ſo, to what purpoſe is it to call men from a dependence on their reaſon, to rely on the evidence of men for the truth of a fact ſo uncommon, and in the nature of it ſo ſurpriſing, as not eaſily to gain admittance to our belief? a fact, which had we ſeen ourſelves, we might perhaps have ſuſpected the report of our own ſenſes, and cannot therefore eaſily refer ourſelves to the ſenſes of others, in a matter of ſo great moment and conſequence?

Whoever, in anſwer to this difficulty, endeavours to weaken and enervate the natural arguments for a future ſtate, is, I think, very ill employed: to me they appear ſo convincing, that I cannot, ſo amiable, that I would not leſſen your opinion of them: but then it is certain that they require more thought and ſpeculation to place them before the mind in their true and ſtrongeſt light, than the generality of men are capable of exerciſing. And whether this be ſo or no, is a matter fitter to be determined by the evidence of hiſtory, than by reaſoning upon the caſe. We are very ill judges, under the light we now enjoy, how far the generality of men could go by the mere ſtrength of reaſon, without the aſſiſtances we have. A right notion of God is the foundation of all true religion; and who is there that thinks himſelf obliged to any thing but his own reaſon for this notion? and yet, if this be the caſe, the world is mightily improved in reaſon theſe laſt ages: for we certainly know many ages paſt, when the true notion of God was hardly to be found in any nation, commonly to be found in none. Since the publi-

cation of the Goſpel the darkneſs has been diſpelled, and reaſon ſees and approves the truths which were before in great meaſure hid from her eyes. The caſe is the ſame with reſpect to the natural arguments for a future ſtate: the arguments duly propoſed and conſidered are of great weight; but yet it is evident they had little weight in the world for many ages together. The natural notion was ſo buried under ſuperſtitious fables and abſurd repreſentations, that it yielded no comfort or ſatisfaction; was ſo liable to be expoſed and ridiculed for the extravagant repreſentations which attended it, that it afforded no certainty, or even probability, to ſupport the hopes of virtue: the vulgar had no ability to reaſon much on the caſe; and the learned, who did, were full of doubts and uncertainties, and found no ſure ground to ſtand on. To remedy this evil, God has propoſed a new evidence to the world: he called his Son from the grave, and ſhewed him before choſen witneſſes for many days; who were ſent into the world to publiſh his reſurrection, as an evidence of a future general reſurrection of all men, and to ſeal the truth of their doctrine with their own blood.

Now, as to this evidence, it is in the nature of it the propereſt for the generality of men: it requires no abſtracted reaſoning, no refinements, to ſhew the force of it: nay, were the wiſeſt man to chooſe an evidence for himſelf of the certainty of a reſurrection, I know not what he could deſire more than to ſee one riſe from the dead.

As to thoſe who pretend to be real and true Deiſts, I cannot ſee what there is in this evidence to

offend them: the main thing we prove by it they acknowledge to be true, that God will judge the world. Since then the Chriſtian religion has no private deſign to ſerve by this evidence, but produces it in confirmation of that general ſenſe of nature which all true religion does admit, why ſhould it be ſuſpected of deceit?

Beſides, the belief of a future ſtate, ſupported by the evidence of the reſurrection of Chriſt, is applied to no other purpoſes in the Chriſtian religion, than every wiſe and good man would deſire it ſhould be applied to, were it a matter to be ſubmitted to his choice. Let us ſee: the Goſpel labours to aſſure us of the certainty of our reſurrection to eternal life; and, not content with the common evidence of reaſon for a future ſtate, has given us a new proof from the very hand and immediate power of God: there is ſuch a concern ſhewed in the Goſpel for fixing and eſtabliſhing this proof, that we may be ſure this proof was provided for the ſake of carrying on the great end and deſign of the Goſpel, whatever it is: ſo that if there is any thing amiſs, any deluſion or deceit in the Goſpel, we may certainly find it leaning upon this article of the reſurrection for its ſupport. But now, what does the Goſpel require of us, in virtue of our belief of this article? Why, nothing but what reaſon and natural religion require of us; to live ſoberly and righteouſly, in obedience to God, and in love with our brethren. Where is there any ground now for ſuſpicion in the caſe? Men do not uſe to play tricks, or endeavour to impoſe upon the world for nothing. Shew us then any one uſe made of this article in the Goſpel, but what all ſober-

minded men will allow to be a juſt and proper uſe, and we will part with our evidence: but if no ſuch thing can be ſhewed, never ſuſpect any guile or deceit in the evidence calculated to ſerve and promote ſuch noble and worthy purpoſes.

One thing there is in the Scripture account of a future ſtate that is new, the deſignation of the man Chriſt Jeſus for Judge of the quick and the dead; but this is ſuch a new thing as is liable to no objections on the part of natural religion; for it is no part of natural religion to maintain that God muſt do every thing immediately by himſelf, and in his own perſon, without uſing the agency or miniſtry of other beings. This deſignation of Chriſt to be Judge of the world is no impeachment of the authority of God: the Son acts by the Father's commiſſion, who hath given all judgment to him: it makes no change in the nature of the judgment: we ſhall anſwer for nothing to Chriſt, but what our reaſon tells us we are accountable for. So that take in all the circumſtances belonging to this article of Chriſtian faith, and yet there is nothing for you to do, nothing for you to expect, but what you are already perſuaded you ought to do and expect, if you are in truth ſo honeſt and ſincere a profeſſor of natural religion as to believe in God, and that he will judge the world in truth and juſtice. This difference there is between you and a Chriſtian believer: you have ſuch hopes of futurity as reaſon and reflection can furniſh out: the Chriſtian has the ſame hopes, and in the ſame degree; but has moreover the expreſs promiſe and teſtimony of God, confirmed by the reſurrection of his only Son, to ſtrengthen his

expectations of immortality. Suppoſe the Chriſtian miſtaken, even then he ſtands upon the ſame ground that you do; ſuppoſe his faith to be well eſtabliſhed, he ſtands upon much better, and is able to render to himſelf a better account of the hope that is in him. This is the advantage we draw from this great article of faith; an article introduced to ſerve true religion, founded upon an evidence of ſuch force, that it can make its way to every underſtanding, and wants no help from philoſophy to ſupport it.

Thus you ſee how the Goſpel has ſupplied the defect of natural religion in this momentous point: how wiſely this proviſion of the Goſpel was made, let experience bear witneſs. Wherever the Goſpel prevails, the hopes of immortality are clear and diſtinct: the preaching the reſurrection of Chriſt conveys to the loweſt member of the church of Chriſt a clear conception of his own future condition.

The reſurrection itſelf was indeed a great and ſtupendous work; but the hand that performed it was greater. No one, who believes that God made all men at firſt, can poſſibly doubt of his power to raiſe them again from the grave. Allow, you will ſay, to the power of God all that can be deſired; yet ſtill the reſurrection remains to be proved, as to the fact; and proved it is by the concurrent teſtimony of eyewitneſſes, who have given not only their words, but their very lives, in confirmation of this truth: and ſurely they were in very good earneſt, when they embraced and taught the doctrine upon ſuch hard terms. And methinks no ſerious man

ſhould be very hard of belief in this caſe Did the article of the reſurrection make any alteration in our notions of God, or of religion; did it bring any new burden upon us of any ſort, it would be no wonder to ſee men very careful how they admitted it: but now that it requires nothing at our hands but what reaſon and nature require, is attended with no burden or expence to us, pretends only to eſtabliſh and confirm the hopes of nature, what pretence for being ſo very ſcrupulous? Admit the article, your hopes are much improved, your duty nothing increaſed; reject the article, your duty is the ſame, and your hopes much leſs.

How kind a proviſion has the Goſpel made for our weakneſs! how powerfully has it ſupported the intereſt of true religion, by furniſhing the world with ſo plain, and yet ſo ſtrong a proof of a future ſtate, and a judgment to be executed in righteouſneſs, by the man Chriſt Jeſus, whom God raiſed from the dead, and hath ordained to be the Judge of all the world! Let us hold faſt this hope; let this hope be our conſtant encouragement in doing the work of the Lord; let us do his work cheerfully and heartily, knowing for certain that *our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.*

DISCOURSE LIV.

PROVERBS ix. 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom; and the knowledge of the Holy is underſtanding.

THE advantages which we may expect to reap from religion are many and great, but not all equally certain: ſome are expoſed to the chances and caſualties of human life, and depend upon circumſtances that are not under our own conduct and government: hence it is that the beſt men are ſometimes expoſed to the ſevereſt trials and ſharpeſt afflictions. But there are two things which ſincere religion can never fail of attaining; one of which is the greateſt ingredient, nay, the very foundation of all happineſs in this world; the other is, the happineſs and immortality which wait for us in the world to come: this bleſſing we can only enjoy now through faith and hope; but the other is preſent with us, the certain conſequence and neceſſary attendant upon a mind truly virtuous and religious; I mean, the peace and tranquillity, the eaſe and ſatisfaction of mind, which flow not ſo much from a ſenſe of our having punctually and exactly diſ-

charged our duty in all reſpects, which is more than ever we may hope for, but from a due ſenſe of God and religion, and the uprightneſs of our deſires and intentions to ſerve him. This advantage is not, properly ſpeaking, a reward given or beſtowed upon the virtuous; but it ariſes from the nature of things, from the frame and contexture of our ſouls: it is virtue's own child, her natural offſpring, and can never leave or forſake her: for as long as men have a ſenſe of virtue and vice, good and evil, ſo long will they condemn and puniſh themſelves for tranſgreſſing their obligations; ſo long will they find peace and ſatisfaction in their obedience.

Since then nature has given us notice of the being of the Almighty, and ſhewn us the relation we ſtand in towards him, and conſequently the duty and ſervice which we owe him; it neceſſarily follows, that this ſenſe, rightly adjuſted, and duly purſued, in a regular and honeſt diſcharge of our duty towards God, muſt breed in our minds true peace and comfort; and, conſequently, that true religion muſt be the ſource and ſpring even of our temporal happineſs and enjoyments. But yet look into the world, and the face of things has quite a different appearance: religion is fearful, ſuſpicious, full of doubts and miſgivings of heart, never ſatisfied with itſelf, always ſeeking, but ſeldom finding where to fix itſelf in reſt and tranquillity: hence it comes to paſs, that ſome, not rightly conſidering the nature and cauſes of things, miſconceive concerning religion itſelf, and think it better to lay aſide all pretences to it, than perpetually to fluctuate in the troubled ocean of doubts and uncertainties, that encompaſſes it round

about. And thus ſuperſtition, by making many miſerable in the purſuit of religion, makes others, to avoid being loſt in that gulph, throw themſelves into another of atheiſm and irreligion, which is a much deeper. In theſe two extremes, of infidelity on one ſide, and ſuperſtition on the other, true religion is loſt, and, together with it, that peace and comfort, and eaſe of mind, which belong to it: for, view God from which of the two extremes you pleaſe, his appearance muſt be dreadful: you may ſee him in the terrors of majeſty and power; but the kinder rays which flow from his mercy and goodneſs and benevolence towards mankind, will be intercepted from your eyes.

The atheiſtical unbeliever, if ever he ſo far forgets himſelf as to ſuppoſe the being of a God for a time, ſees nothing of him but the judge and the avenger, and haſtens back to his infidelity to ſkreen him from the wrath and juſtice, which even in imagination were inſupportable. Superſtition is ſo perpetually encompaſſed with a thick cloud of its own fears and ſuſpicions, that it cannot diſcern the beauties and holineſs of the Creator: every frightful ſpectre, that walks in its own imagination, is miſtaken for the Deity; and ſuperſtition adores it, as the wild Indians are ſaid to worſhip the Devil, not for love, but for fear. The caſe then being thus, that mankind is in a great meaſure robbed of the preſent comfort and pleaſure of religion, either by infidelity or ſuperſtition; it is very well worth our while to ſearch into the cauſes that lead to this unhappineſs, to ſee what it is that has corrupted this living ſpring,

this fountain of delight, and turned its waters into gall and bitterneſs.

The words of the text, rightly underſtood, will not only afford us an occaſion for this inquiry, but will alſo direct us in it; and, by ſhewing us the principles of true religion, will help us to diſcover the errors and miſconceits which are introductive of irreligion and ſuperſtition.

The fear of the Lord, ſays the wiſe King, *is the beginning of wiſdom*; *and the knowledge of the Holy is underſtanding*. This is not the only place where he expreſſes himſelf in this manner: the ſame thing, with ſome ſmall variety in the expreſſion, is more than once repeated again in the book of Proverbs: it is to be met with alſo in the Pſalmiſt, in the very ſame words almoſt; and the thought occurs frequently in the inſpired writers: ſo that this ſeems to be a common maxim, or principle of religion, that runs through all the ſacred records, and by which all good and wiſe men have guided themſelves in the great and momentous concern of religion.

In ſpeaking to theſe words, I propoſe to myſelf theſe two things:

Firſt, To ſhew, that the text, and other the like paſſages of holy Scripture, will be found, upon examining the ſenſe and reaſon of them, to contain this general propoſition, That a juſt conception of God, of his excellencies and perfections, is the true foundation of religion.

Secondly, That this juſt conception of God is the right rule to form our judgments by, in all par-

ticular matters of religion, and the only thing that can ſecure us from either atheiſm or ſuperſtition.

Firſt, I will endeavour to ſhew you, that the text, and other the like paſſages of Scripture, will be found, upon examining the ſenſe and reaſon of them, to contain this general propoſition, That a juſt conception of God, of his excellencies and perfections, is the true foundation of religion: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom.*

To this purpoſe it might be thought ſufficient perhaps by ſome to obſerve, that fear, whatever limited or enlarged notion you underſtand it in, is not a voluntary paſſion: we cannot be afraid or not afraid of things juſt as we pleaſe; but fear neceſſarily relates to, and ariſes from, the notion or conception we have of the thing feared: we fear any Being in proportion to the power and will which we conceive that Being to have either to hurt or to protect us. The different kinds of fear likewiſe are no otherwiſe diſtinguiſhable from one another, than by conſidering the different conceptions or ideas of the things feared: for fear, being the neceſſary effect of ſuch conceptions, muſt differ according to the difference of the conceptions. If we join to great power, great malice and a ſettled reſolution to do miſchief, ſuch an object ſtrikes with terror and confuſion, and breeds in our minds a baſe and ſlaviſh fear: if we add to great power, great goodneſs and benevolence, ſuch an object creates an awe and reverence, and fills our hearts with filial fear and veneration. When therefore we ſay, the fear of this, or fear of that, does ſo or ſo, we can have no ſenſe of the propoſition, without having a notion of the

thing feared. The fear of a tyrant, and the fear of a father, are very different paſſions; but he that knows not the difference between a tyrant and a father will never be able to diſtinguiſh theſe paſſions. When therefore we read that *the fear of God is the beginning of wiſdom*, we can have no underſtanding of the words without having a juſt conception of God, by which alone we can judge of the nature of godly fear, and of its operations. Allowing therefore that the wiſe King, by *the fear of the Lord*, means a right and due fear, it neceſſarily ſuppoſes a right and due conception of the Lord, from which only that right and due fear can flow, which is the mother of wiſdom and underſtanding: for if men miſconceive concerning God, either as to his holineſs and purity, to his mercy or juſtice, their fear of him will not produce wiſdom; which is evident from the infinite follies of the heathen world, which grew out of their falſe fear and reverence of their gods. This propoſition therefore, *The fear of God is the beginning of wiſdom*, is equivalent to this, A juſt notion and conception of God is the beginning of wiſdom.

Having deduced this expoſition from the order and nature of things in themſelves, let us try the other method, which is more familiar, and ſee whether we can come to any expoſition of theſe words, which will not lead to the ſame thing.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom: we are to conſider what is meant by the *fear of the Lord.* The reaſon of the inquiry is evidently this, that we experience in ourſelves different kinds and degrees of fear, which have very different effects

and operations: ſome ſtupify the ſenſes, and rob us of all wiſdom and underſtanding: others render us active and induſtrious, and give an edge to our invention how to ſhun and avoid the thing we fear. Of what ſort then is the fear of the Lord? Is it an abject ſlaviſh fear? No, certainly: all expoſitors agree to warn you againſt this ſenſe and interpretation of fear. But were you to aſk the reaſon why the fear of God is not a ſlaviſh fear, there is only this reaſon to be given you, Becauſe God is no tyrant: and I ſuppoſe every man of ſenſe will admit this for a good reaſon: and what elſe is this but adjuſting the ſenſe of fear from the true notion and conception of God? The properties of religious fear, which are mentioned in Scripture, are various: *The fear of the Lord is clean*, ſays the Pſalmiſt: *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil*, ſays Solomon; and again, *It is a fountain of life*; and again, *In the fear of the Lord is ſtrong confidence.* Try all theſe in the ſame way, and you will find they are deducible only from the notion and conception of God, and are not to be underſtood without it. The fear of God therefore is not to be expounded from the nature of fear, conſidered as a diſtinct paſſion of the mind; but by conſidering the natural effect that a juſt ſenſe and notion of God has upon the mind of a rational creature: for the fear of God ſignifies that frame and affection of ſoul, which is the conſequence of a juſt notion and conception of the Deity. It is called the fear of God, becauſe, as majeſty and power are the principal parts of the idea of God, ſo fear and reverence are the main ingredients in the affection that ariſes from it: not but that love and honour

and admiration are included in the notion. And in this latitude the wiſe King moſt certainly underſtood it, when he ſaid, *In the fear of the Lord is ſtrong confidence:* for confidence is no effect of fear, properly ſo called; but it is a natural effect of a juſt ſenſe of the Almighty's power and goodneſs.

There is but one thing that occurs to me that ſeems to look like a difficulty in this way of arguing, which is this: If the fear of God denotes that ſenſe and affection of mind which is the natural effect of a true notion and conception of God, it ſhould ſeem that none ſhould be void of the fear of God, but thoſe only who want right notions of God; and yet we know there are ſinners againſt knowledge, who diſcover no fear of God, though they can diſcourſe as rationally as others upon his attributes and perfections. There are two ways by which men may diſcover that they have a ſenſe of the fear of God: one indeed is by acting agreeably to it: but there is another, which is by conſcience: ſelf-condemnation, for acting contrary to the fear of God, is an evident token of the ſenſe of that fear. But if there are any inſtances where neither of theſe ſigns are diſcoverable, there is a farther account to be given; for it is not merely the ſpeculative notions of God which produce this ſenſe, but there muſt be a perſuaſion alſo, that there is a real Being to whom theſe ideas actually belong: without this the notion is idle and fruitleſs: we may raiſe in our fancies very terrible objects; but they produce little or no effect, as long as we contemplate them as the mere creatures of our imagination. In like manner the notion of a God may cauſe little change in the fool's

heart, which ſays there is no God. And though I am far from thinking that there are many Atheiſts in the world, yet there is in many an heart a ſecret lurking infidelity, or rather a want of a due belief and perſuaſion of the reality of the things inviſible; which makes religion appear ſo cold and formal, ſo void of life and activity. Where this is the caſe, there wants a juſt conception of God; and no wonder there ſhould want alſo a due ſenſe of the fear of the Lord. But let us proceed to the ſecond thing, which was to ſhew,

That this juſt conception of God is the right rule to form our judgments by in matters of religion, and the only thing that can ſecure us from either atheiſm or ſuperſtition.

Hitherto we have conſidered the true meaning of the fear of God. We are now to conſider what is affirmed of it: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom*; taking wiſdom here to mean true religion, as it often does in the books of Solomon, and in the Pſalms of David. When it is ſaid that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom*, you are not to underſtand merely that the notion of God is, in point of time, or order of nature, prior to religion; which, though it be true, yet is it not the whole of what is taught concerning the fear of God. All religion, indeed, has a relation to God; and therefore without the ſenſe and notion of a Deity there can be no religion: but there is religion which is folly and ſuperſtition, that better ſuits with any name than that of wiſdom: and therefore, if the fear of God does only in general ſhew us the neceſſity of religion, and does then leave us to take our chance in

the great variety of forms and inſtitutions that are to be found in the world, it may be our hap to learn folly as well as wiſdom, upon the inſtigation of this principle. But, in truth, the fear of God does not only ſhew us the neceſſity of religion, but likewiſe teaches us wherein true religion, which is indeed wiſdom, does conſiſt; and enables us to judge of our offering, whether it be fit to be laid before the Almighty.

In natural religion this is evidently the caſe; becauſe in that ſtate there is no pretence to any other rule that can come in competition with this. It is from the notion of a God that men come to have any ſenſe of religion; and it is by the ſame principle only that they determine this to be a proper part of religion, that to be otherwiſe. When we conſider God as Lord and Governor of the world, we ſoon perceive ourſelves to be in ſubjection, and that we ſtand obliged, both in intereſt and duty, to pay obedience to the Supreme. But what is this obedience? and in what acts does it conſiſt? For this we muſt recur to our natural notion of God. If we conceive him to be holy, pure, and juſt, we muſt neceſſarily judge that he will be pleaſed with no ſervice but what is agreeable to holineſs, purity, and juſtice: if we conceive him to be a Being good and merciful, a common Father to mankind, whoſe love is without partiality, and equal to all his creatures, we muſt, upon this view, conclude, that religion binds us not to be hurtful or injurious to any of the ſons of men; becauſe it is a contradiction to think that we are bound to ſerve and obey God, and yet at liberty to injure and abuſe thoſe whom he moſt affec-

tionately loves. Mutual love and benevolence may be a moral duty, ariſing from the relation of man to man, upon mere principles of reaſon, excluſive of religion; but it becomes part of our religion from ſuch conſideration of God's nature as I have juſt now mentioned. Take from the notion of God any of the moral perfections that belong to it, and you will find ſuch alteration muſt influence religion likewiſe, which will degenerate in the ſame proportion as the notion of God is corrupted. The ſuperſtitious man, viewing God through the falſe perſpectives of fear and ſuſpicion, loſes ſight of his goodneſs, and ſees only a dreadful ſpectre made up of anger and revenge: hence religion becomes his torment, and he thinks, the worſe he uſes himſelf, the more he ſhall pleaſe God; and the beſt ſervice he can pay, is that which renders him moſt miſerable.

There are other kinds of ſuperſtition, which, though they have leſs of torment and anguiſh, have not more of reaſon or religion: ſuch are they which have turned religion into a trade, and found ſomething to offer God in exchange for virtue and holineſs. In all theſe caſes the ſpring is corrupted, the notion of God is loſt, or not attended to: what notion has that man of God, who thinks that waſhing his hands three or four times a day is part of religion; who imagines that penances and pilgrimages, or any thing elſe, is equivalent to virtue and holineſs? Search your notion of God: conſider his holineſs and purity, and ſee what you can find to make you think that beating yourſelf, or waſhing yourſelf, or parting with your money, will pleaſe him like virtue and holineſs. Theſe muſt appear to

be abſurd follies to any man who will attend to this principle. In the heathen world, ſome happily diſcovered ſome glimmerings of the true holineſs and perfections of God, and were to maintain virtue upon the foot of religion: others perhaps were much better men than their principles of religion led them to be. The natural ſenſe of good and evil, and the relation of man to man, led ſome generous ſpirits into the right way. But in this caſe goodneſs was not the effect of religion, but of a rational nature: it was a political or ſociable virtue, but not a religious one.

It is plain then, both from reaſon and fact, that a juſt conception and ſenſe of God is the beginning of wiſdom, the fountain from which true religion flows: by this it is that you may diſtinguiſh between true and falſe religion, ſince that only is true religion which is agreeable to the nature of God. *God is a ſpirit*, ſays our bleſſed Lord, *and they that worſhip him muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.* Here you are referred to the ſame principle, and by the beſt authority: you ſee here our Lord himſelf inferring the nature of worſhip from the nature of God.

This may be true, perhaps you will ſay, upon the foot of natural religion, where we have nothing but natural notions to direct us: but what is it to us, who have the ſurer word of prophecy to guide and inſtruct us? In anſwer to this I would obſerve, that natural religion is the foundation upon which revelation ſtands; and therefore revelation can never ſuperſede natural religion without deſtroying itſelf. The knowledge of God is, in the nature of things,

antecedent to revelation; for there can be no reaſon for attending to the voice of God till we know who God is. The natural notion of God then is the foundation of revelation, as well as of natural religion; and, conſequently, nothing contrary to this notion can be admitted for revelation, any more than for natural religion.

There is indeed a difference, which ought always to be remembered, and for want of which ſome have imagined they have diſcovered great oppoſition between natural religion and revelation, where in truth there is none. The difference is this: In natural religion nothing can be admitted that may not be proved and deduced from our natural notions; for every thing muſt be admitted for ſome reaſon; and in natural religion no reaſon can take place, but this agreeableneſs of the thing to our natural ſenſe: but in revelation it is otherwiſe; for revelation introduces a new reaſon, the will of God, which has, and ought to have, the authority of a law with us. Nor is it plain, from any natural principle, that God cannot enlarge our duty, or oblige us to any thing but what nature has already obliged us to: it is certain he cannot contradict his own nature; and therefore he can teach us nothing contrary to the natural ſenſe he has given us of himſelf: but, as he has authority to give us laws, he may add to our duty and obligations as he ſees fit. And therefore it is not neceſſary all parts of revelation ſhould be ſuch as may be proved by natural reaſon: it is ſufficient that they do not contradict it; for the will of God is a ſufficient reaſon for our ſubmiſſion.

But, however, the eſſentials of religion, even un-

der revelation, muſt be tried and judged by the ſame principle. No revelation can diſpenſe with virtue and holineſs; for it may as reaſonably diſpenſe with our believing the being of a God, as with our believing that he can or would vacate the obligations to virtue and holineſs: for to remove God out of the world, and to change the eſſential properties of his nature, is one and the ſame thing. We may be ſure then that all ſuch doctrines, all ſuch rites and ceremonies, as tend to ſubvert true goodneſs and holineſs, are not of God's teaching or introducing.

Nor is there, I believe, a more certain way to keep ourſelves ſteadfaſtly in the purity of the Goſpel, than by keeping our eye conſtantly on this rule. Could enthuſiaſm, or deſtructive zeal, ever have grown out of the Goſpel, had men compared their practices with the natural ſenſe they have of God? Would they not have ſeen, that to defend even religion by cruelty and bloodſhed muſt be hateful in the ſight of God? Could religion ever have degenerated into ſuch folly and ſuperſtition, as in ſome places it has done, had the true notions of God been preſerved, and all religious actions examined by it?

On the other hand, ſome there are, who, taking religion to be what it appears to be in the world, find ſo much folly, and ſuperſtition, and uncertainty in it, that they have choſen, as the ſafer way, to reject all religion: but could men have judged thus perverſely, had they attended to the true rule, and formed their notions of religion from the nature and wiſdom of God, and not from the follies and extravagancies of men? How does the folly and perverſe-

neſs of others affect your duty to God? or, how came you abſolved from all religion, becauſe others have corrupted theirs? Suppoſe the people deceived, and the prieſts either ignorant or ſuperſtitious; what then? Does the error of one, or the ignorance of the other, deſtroy the relation between you and God, and make it reaſonable for you to throw off all obedience? The fear of God will teach you another ſort of wiſdom. This therefore you ought to cultivate and improve, and preſerve free from error or corruption, as your ſureſt guide in all doubts, and as the true principle of religious wiſdom.

DISCOURSE LV.

PART I.

LUKE X. 29.

But he, willing to juſtify himſelf, ſaid unto Jeſus, And who is my neighbour?

THE precepts of the Law and of the Goſpel being conceived in general terms, and expreſſed in the moſt eaſy and familiar manner, men of ſpeculative minds, whoſe buſineſs is rather inquiry than practice, have taken ſo much pains to adjuſt the limitations and reſtrictions which they conceive to be applicable to the general rule, that in many caſes the duty has been loſt in the explication; and the precept has been ſo pared and cut to the quick by exceptions, that it is no longer of any uſe or ſervice in common life.

The law of God commands us *to love our neighbours as ourſelves*; the interpretation of which will better come from our hearts than our heads; for we cannot help feeling the ſenſe of our duty as long as we attend to the motions of nature within ourſelves: our own wants and infirmities will ſhew us the matter and the extent of our obedience; and ſelf-love

will direct us in the practice and execution: but when men come to ſpeculate upon the point, and to define the exact bounds of love, and to determine nicely how far the notion of neighbourhood is to be extended, the event too commonly is, that there is but very little love left to be diſpoſed of among our neighbours, and, that it may the better hold out, but very few neighbours left to ſhare in our love. Call a covetous man to the exerciſe of this duty in an inſtance of charity; ſhew him a man oppreſſed with poverty and hunger, clothed in rags, and deſtitute of all the comforts and ſupports of life, and bid him love this poor wretch as himſelf: he will tell you, perhaps, the law is excellent and good, and he does love the man, and pities his misfortunes; but he has nothing to ſpare: he is not obliged to love another better than himſelf; and therefore it is unreaſonable to expect that he ſhould ſtraiten and pinch himſelf to enlarge the conveniencies of others: he grudges him no degree of love, and heartily wiſhes him at eaſe and in plenty; but cannot afford any thing towards it out of his little. Or perhaps he will queſtion upon what title this man pretends to be his neighbour: he is ſure he never ſaw him before, nor ever heard that he lived near him; and if every body that will may claim to be his neighbour, there will be no end of it; and he may ſoon give his neighbours all he has, if every one that begs muſt be his neighbour. There is room in all other inſtances of our duty for the like ſubterfuges; and as long as men find comfort in ſuch excuſes for their negligence and diſobedience, they will never want invention to furniſh them.

It may ſeem ſtrange perhaps that the laws of God ſhould be liable to this uſage; ſince being the tranſcript of perfect wiſdom, and the work of him who not only knows, but foreſees the ſecrets of all hearts, we might expect to find them ſo guarded and fenced about, and made ſo plain and expreſs in all caſes, that it ſhould have been in no man's power to queſtion the ſenſe or meaning of the precept, or to cover his iniquity with the leaſt umbrage of an excuſe drawn from the interpretation of holy Scripture: but there are very good reaſons to be given why the law of God is not ſo explicit and particular. Were the Scripture to deſcend into the conſideration of all caſes, and to ſtate the exact bounds of our duty in all poſſible circumſtances of life, we might ſay perhaps, without being much beholden to a figure of ſpeech, that the world itſelf could not contain the things that ſhould be written. A law extending itſelf to ſuch variety of caſes and circumſtances would be altogether uſeleſs, and men might grow old in ſin and iniquity before they could poſſibly learn their duty, or extract the rules proper for their own uſe, out of the infinite variety of laws, many of which have no reſpect to them or their circumſtances.

Beſides, God gave every man a law to direct him, when he made him a reaſonable creature, and expects obedience in virtue of that law of nature. The Goſpel was given not to exclude, but to aſſiſt the exerciſe of reaſon: and therefore to require a law ſo exact and circumſtantial, that there ſhould be no room for the uſe or obedience of reaſon, is to preclude men from thoſe nobler inſtances of duty

which flow from the right uſe of their minds, and which are the proper ſacrifice offered by a rational ſoul to God. The uprightneſs of a man, and the integrity of his mind, are as diſcernible in his application of the rules of the Goſpel, as by any outward acts whatever. A man who reads in the Goſpel that he ought to love his neighbour as himſelf, and from his own ſenſe and reaſon ſupplies the law with this noble comment, that all the ſons of men are his neighbours, is as much a better Chriſtian than the man who extends the law only to his townſmen or his countrymen, as his neighbourhood is more univerſal.

Farther, a law deſcending to every particular caſe would be of no manner of ſervice in correcting the evil complained of: it is the perverſeneſs of the will, and not the weakneſs of the underſtanding, that teaches men the evaſions of the law: were the law more explicit, they would only take more pains to get rid of its obligations; for the plainneſs of the law will do but little in correcting the malignity of the will, which yet is the only thing that ſtands in need of an improvement. The command of loving our neighbour is ſo far from wanting to be enlarged, that I believe there is no right good Chriſtian who thinks any mortal excluded from the benefit of it, as it now ſtands: to what purpoſe then ſhould it be enlarged? Were it expreſſed in never ſo general terms, it might ſtill be miſunderſtood, or perverted, by ſuch as obſtinately refuſe to ſee. Suppoſe the law conceived in the fulleſt terms, and that it were ſaid that every man in the world is to be eſteemed our neighbour, and has a right to our love and aſ-

ſiſtance, and that it is our duty to do him good; and were this law, ſo expreſſed, to be made the ſtanding rule of the courts of inquiſition, what would the world be the better for it? For as long as they will maintain that the greateſt good they can do their brother is, in order to reform his ſuppoſed errors in religion, to whip him and torment him, to ſequeſter his goods and eſtate, or to deliver him over to the fire, the more univerſal their rule is, the worſe it muſt fare with all the world: and, whilſt they have ſuch notions of doing good, the only thing to be wiſhed for is, that they might think it their duty to hate all mankind.

Since therefore it is impracticable to give rules and directions for all poſſible caſes, and to adjuſt the general laws of virtue and obedience to the great variety of circumſtances incident to human life, without deſtroying the end of all laws, which are intended for directions and rules; but, were they to take in all particular caſes, would ſoon grow too voluminous to be ſerviceable; there being no life long enough, no induſtry ſufficient for ſuch a ſtudy, and no memory ſtrong enough to retain ſuch a body of inſtitutes: ſince reaſon and judgment would be of no farther uſe in virtue and obedience, were men in all caſes limited by particular clauſes and proviſions; becauſe it would be great preſumption for men to exerciſe their reaſon and their judgment, in order to govern and direct themſelves, were the law of God ſo expreſs and particular in all caſes, as to exclude farther inquiry; by which means the nobleſt inſtance of virtue, which is ſhewn in the free choice that reaſon makes of what is good and

amiable, guided by the general directions of God's law, would be oftentimes loſt and impracticable: ſince likewiſe the end propoſed to be ſerved by ſuch numerous and particular laws would not be obtained; but men would ſtill find room to cavil at their duty, and be able to furniſh pretences to evade it, as is evident from this plain reaſon, that it is not want of knowledge, but of will to obey, which makes men wreſt and torture the law of God: had they therefore more light from the moſt expreſs directions, yet ſtill their diſinclination to virtue would be the ſame, and produce the ſame ill effects; and, conſequently, were the laws of the Goſpel ever ſo much enlarged, the ſame difficulties would remain, as long as the ſame perverſeneſs of will continues among men: from theſe conſiderations, I ſay, it does appear, that the Goſpel is not to be charged with the doubts and diſputes which often ariſe upon the laws and precepts delivered in it, the Goſpel having all the perfection requiſite in a law deſigned for the government and inſtruction of rational creatures; but we muſt look out elſewhere to find the cauſe that may give us a ſatisfactory account why men ſo often and ſo widely differ upon the plaineſt points of duty, and whence the difficulties and ſcruples grow, which perplex even the cleareſt precepts of Chriſtian morality.

The text, if carefully attended to, will diſcover to us the cauſe to which this evil owes its growth and increaſe; and the parable which our Saviour put forth, inſtead of a direct anſwer to the Lawyer's queſtion, will teach us where to ſeek and find the remedy.

Interpreters are not agreed in the meaning of the former part of the text, *But he, willing to juſtify himſelf, ſaid*; for it does not appear what occaſion he had for any juſtification of himſelf: no accuſation had been brought againſt him; nobody had charged him with any neglect or contempt of the law: ſo far otherwiſe, that our Lord had commended his wiſe anſwer, and promiſed him life, if he obeyed the terms which he himſelf had propoſed: *And he ſaid unto him, Thou haſt anſwered right; This do, and thou ſhalt live:* upon which immediately follow the words of the text, *But he, willing to juſtify himſelf, ſaid unto Jeſus, And who is my neighbour?* Beſides, it does not preſently appear how any juſtification of himſelf could ariſe out of this queſtion, or any anſwer that might be given to it. What fault did he mean to excuſe by aſking, *Who is my neighbour?* or, how did his virtue or innocence depend upon the anſwer that ſhould be returned to this inquiry? Theſe difficulties, I ſay, have led interpreters into different ſentiments: but, without examining their opinions, I ſhall propoſe to you one that ſeems to be the true, becauſe the moſt eaſy and natural expoſition of the place.

This Lawyer came to our Lord, and, tempting him, ſaid, *What ſhall I do to inherit eternal life?* Our Lord returns him to the law for an anſwer to his queſtion, ſaying, *What readeſt thou?* He readily anſwered, that in the law he found that he was to *love the Lord his God with all his might, and his neighbour as himſelf.* This account our Saviour approves, and ſays unto him, *Thou haſt anſwered right*; and adds, that, if he would practiſe the law as well as he ſeemed to underſtand it, he was in no danger: *This do, and thou*

ſhalt live. But in this part, relating to practice, the Lawyer well knew how this precept in particular, of loving our neighbours, had been loaded with exceptions and limitations by the Jewiſh doctors, and that he had never eſteemed any body to be his neighbour who was not of the ſame blood, and who did not profeſs the ſame religion with himſelf; for which reaſon he hated many, who, according to the letter, were his neighbours, as the Samaritans were, who dwelt very near, but were the averſion of every Jew, being eſteemed as the corrupters of the faith and true religion. Since therefore life eternal depended upon his obedience to the law, as he had heard from our Saviour; and ſince whether his obedience were ſuch as it ought to be depended wholly upon the Jewiſh interpretation of the law, and could no otherwiſe be maintained than by excluding from the rights and privileges of neighbourhood all who were not of the ſtock and faith of Iſrael; in order therefore to his own juſtification he very properly puts the queſtion to our Lord, *And who is my neighbour?* for as this queſtion ſhould be reſolved, he would be found either to have fulfilled or tranſgreſſed the commandment. Had our Lord determined in favour of the Jewiſh interpretation, and told him that thoſe only were his neighbours who were of the ſame ſtock and family, and who worſhipped God in the ſame manner that he did, the Lawyer had been juſtified in his practice, and his obedience might have deſerved commendation, as well as his prudent anſwer out of the law had done before: but, when our Saviour had forced him into a confeſſion that even the Samaritan was his neighbour, he ſtood con-

demned by his own ſentence, and by the example of the Samaritan which he had approved, and was ſent away with this ſhort but full reproof and admonition; *Go, and do thou likewiſe.*

The words thus expounded ſhew us upon what motives men act, and what it is that prejudices their minds in the interpretation of God's law: they are *willing to juſtify themſelves*; and therefore employ all their force and ſkill to make the command countenance their practice, and to ſpeak ſuch language only as may be conſiſtent with their inclinations. When our actions are ſuch as the law enjoins, when we do what is commanded, and forbear what is forbidden, then is our obedience perfect. This is ſo plain a deſcription of obedience, with reſpect to the law which is to be obeyed, that it cannot be diſputed. A truly virtuous man endeavours to bend all his paſſions and inclinations towards the command, and to make them entirely ſubmiſſive to it. The man who loves not his duty is often uneaſy and reſtleſs under the pain of ſelf-condemnation; and, knowing that all would be well, did but his actions and the law agree, he labours to bend the law towards his inclinations, that it may juſtify him in all his doings, and yield him the pleaſure and ſatisfaction of thinking himſelf righteous.

It is no great wonder, when men are ſo deeply engaged in any error either of practice or doctrine, that they ſhould labour to reconcile themſelves as far as poſſible with the commands and injunctions of God's law; for, as great as the pleaſure of ſin is, as large as the profit of iniquity often is, they cannot of themſelves ſuſtain the ſpirit of a man againſt

the girds and laſhes of a guilty conſcience. Whilſt the pleaſure is new and in its full vigour; whilſt the gain is counting over and treaſuring up, the mind, perhaps, loſt in the preſent enjoyment, may want no other comfort: but the pleaſures of vice have their intermiſſion, and are ſucceeded by cold damps, which ſeize the ſpirits. The gains of iniquity are not always pouring themſelves in: when the ill-gotten wealth is bagged up, there will be ſpare time more than enough for a man to aſk himſelf how he got theſe mighty riches. In theſe ſeaſons of reflection, in theſe intervals of thought and reaſon, the ſoul wants other comforts than ſuch as can ariſe from pleaſures that are paſt, or from treaſures that are hidden in the earth. A man can never long like a bargain which he really thinks he ſhall ſuffer for hereafter; and therefore, to quiet and eaſe himſelf, he frames many devices how to eſcape the puniſhment he dreads: being eaſy to be perſuaded, he ſoon convinces himſelf, that the laws of God have been too rigorouſly expounded, and preſſed too far; that, in truth, he has not offended againſt the law of God, but only againſt the cruel law of the interpreters, whoſe pleaſure it is to lay heavy burdens upon other ſhoulders, which themſelves care not to touch with one of their fingers. By theſe means the eaſy caſuiſt comes to ſuch a temper with himſelf, that he can at once enjoy and juſtify his iniquity.

When the young man in the Goſpel came to our Lord, inquiring upon what terms he might inherit eternal life; our Lord ſet the commands before him: *Do not commit adultery: Do not kill: Do not ſteal: Do not bear falſe witneſs: Honour thy father*

and thy mother. Thus far all was well: theſe terms he willingly accepted; for he had been virtuouſly bred, and had obſerved theſe things from his youth; and, having no guilt to juſtify, he had no exceptions to make to the commandments. Our Lord, delighted with his towardly diſpoſition, would have led him on to greater perfection: *Yet lackeſt thou,* ſays he, *one thing: Sell all that thou haſt, and diſtribute unto the poor, and thou ſhalt have treaſure in heaven; and come and follow me.* The young man, who had not committed adultery, nor been guilty of theft, or diſobedience to his parent, and therefore had no fault to find with the former laws, had, it ſeems, a great eſtate, and therefore could by no means digeſt this; *but was exceeding ſorrowful, for he was very rich:* ſorrowful, not becauſe he was rich, for then he might eaſily have complied, and eaſed his ſorrow; but ſorrowful to find any thing in the Goſpel inconſiſtent with his riches. How gladly would he have liſtened to any ſoftenings of this precept! How would he have adored a teacher who would have made him a conſiſtent title to heaven and his eſtate! In this inſtance you ſee the diſpoſition which makes men ſtrive with the law of God, and labour to render it of a piece with their own affections: in others we will ſhew you the practice.

The Jews had a law, commanding that they ſhould honour their father and their mother; which implied an obligation upon children to ſupport and maintain their indigent parents; a precept in itſelf ſo juſt and reaſonable, that it is one of the prime laws of nature: but the Jews, who were hard-hearted to their own fleſh and blood, were un-

eaſy under this burden; and yet the law was plain: and they could not be ſatisfied till they had made the law comply; and therefore they ſet up tradition againſt the expreſs law, and found a way to diſſolve the uneaſy obligations: for thus they taught, as our Saviour juſtly reproves them; *If a man ſhall ſay to his father or mother, It is a gift by whatſoever thou mighteſt be profited by me, he ſhall be free: and ye ſuffer him no more to do aught for his father or mother, making the word of God of none effect through your tradition.* The law was to be ſupplanted, you ſee, to juſtify the open breach and violation of it.

But, to come nearer our own times, and to ſtill plainer inſtances: you know in how many places the Scripture expreſsly forbids us to pay any worſhip or ſervice to any creature; but that we ſhould worſhip and ſerve the Lord, and him only. In this reſpect God has declared himſelf to be a jealous God, and that he will not give his honour to another. Of the Ten Commandments, two are ſpent in ſecuring this fundamental point of true religion; and the Goſpel has, not only in many, but in all its parts, confirmed this great article. Notwithſtanding all this care, it is well known, that no point of doctrine or practice has been more controverted, even among Chriſtians, than this very article. Were the caſe leſs notorious than it is, you would ſay, perhaps, How is this poſſible? How could it enter into any man's head ſo to miſunderſtand the Scriptures? What could lead to ſuch interpretations? That they are ſo interpreted, is very plain; and the account that may be given why they are ſo, is as plain alſo. It was not miſunderſtanding or miſinterpreting the Scriptures

that led to the corruptions in practice: but the corrupt practices firſt got poſſeſſion; and men, *willing to juſtify themſelves*, coined new interpretations of Scripture to ſupport their new practices: and how violent the inclination to juſtify themſelves is may be eaſily underſtood, when we ſee it beat down ſuch expreſs, ſuch plain, ſuch often-repeated injunctions of the word of God. There is not, I believe, one man, whether Chriſtian, Jew, or Pagan, who has ever heard or read the Goſpel, but thinks that all image worſhip, all creature worſhip, is abſolutely forbidden in it, thoſe only excepted who are involved in the practice. Could the Jews give themſelves leave to reproach the Goſpel with ſuch doctrines as ſome Chriſtians pretend to maintain out of it, they would deſire no better arguments for their rejecting it; nor could they, indeed, have better. To ſerve and to worſhip God in prayer, and praiſe, and humble adoration, are things hard to be underſtood to none but ſcholars: in themſelves they are plain; but the notions have been ſo refined, in order to juſtify modern corruptions, that they are become intricate. The command is plain, that God only is to be worſhipped: how then muſt room be made for worſhipping any other? In order to this, worſhip is to be ſplit into many kinds, and one moſt religiouſly preſerved to God, in controverſy at leaſt, that the others may the more freely be imparted to the creature. To this eagerneſs of juſtifying a corrupt practice, we owe the many curious diſtinctions that have been invented to darken and confound the cleareſt truths of the Goſpel.

DISCOURSE LV.

PART II.

THERE is nothing more complained of, and yet nothing more commonly practiſed, among all parties, than the perverting the holy Scriptures to ſupport and maintain the opinions and doctrines which are the diſtinguiſhing marks and characters of different communions. This holds true of all ſects, in proportion as they have departed from the genuine doctrines and practices of Chriſtianity: for all ſects equally labour to maintain their tenets, and more or leſs pervert the Scripture, as they have more or leſs gone aſtray from it.

The ſame diſpoſition is perpetually ſhewing itſelf in private life. There are not ſo many ſelf-condemned ſinners in the world as is generally thought; for it is much if he who has long continued in any ſin has not found out ſome excuſe or ſome juſtification for his vice. A man, who has nothing to judge by but reaſon and Scripture, would wonder how the Scripture was ever made a party to ſuch a defence: but thoſe who are friends to any vice have ſomething elſe that guides their judgment, ſelf-love and intereſt; which are ſuch candid interpreters, that no

vice need fear being tried by the Scriptures, ſo long as they ſit as judges.

From what cauſe it ariſes, that men thus deal with the Scripture and their own reaſon, has been already obſerved: let us now conſider how we may beſt ſecure ourſelves againſt this great abuſe.

The words of the text do not directly lead to this inquiry, nor will they afford much light in it: but if we look a little forward, and obſerve by what means our Lord brought this diſputer to do juſtice to the law of God, and to own even the Samaritan to be the Jew's neighbour, which was a point conſtantly determined otherwiſe by the Jewiſh doctors, it will teach us how men are to be dealt with, by what art they may be led into the confeſſion of truth, and forced to give up the excuſes and pretences under which they have long ſheltered themſelves and their iniquity.

Since therefore what is farther to be ſaid in this argument muſt ariſe from our Lord's anſwer to this queſtion put to him in the text, it will be expedient, in the firſt place, to ſet our Lord's anſwer before you in a true light, which has been obſcured by unneceſſary difficulties raiſed by interpreters. In anſwer to the Lawyer's queſtion, *And who is my neighbour?* our Lord puts a caſe to him for his own judgment: A certain man, travelling from Jeruſalem to Jericho, fell among thieves, loſt all he had, was ſtripped naked, was wounded, and left for dead: a Prieſt paſſed him by in this condition unregarded; a Levite did likewiſe: but a Samaritan, happening to travel that road, had compaſſion on him; dreſſed his wounds, ſet him on his own beaſt, and left him

in good hands, engaging himſelf to anſwer whatever ſhould be expended in the care or cure of him. Upon this caſe our Lord aſks this queſtion: *Which now of theſe three thinkeſt thou was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves? And he ſaid, He that ſhewed mercy on him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto him, Go thou, and do likewiſe.* Great pains have been taken by ſome ſo to adjuſt this caſe, that it might yield a proper anſwer to the Lawyer's queſtion. He aſked, *Who is my neighbour?* that is, Whom am I obliged to love as myſelf? So that our Lord ought to have determined the extent and right of neighbourhood, and from thence deduced the obligations of love and aſſiſtance: whereas the caſe ſuppoſes the love and aſſiſtance, and from thence infers the relation of neighbourhood. The Prieſt and the Levite were not neighbours, becauſe they did not aſſiſt the wounded man: the Samaritan was his neighbour, becauſe he ſhewed kindneſs to him. And if this be ſo, that no man is our neighbour till we have either ſhewed or received kindneſs from him, we cannot then, from the right of neighbourhood, infer the obligations of love; but muſt determine, from the mutual exerciſe of love, the notion and extent of neighbourhood: and, if this be the caſe, no man can offend againſt the law of loving his neighbour; for, if none are our neighbours but thoſe whom we love, then every man certainly loves his neighbours.

But if we conſider the caſe fairly, and view it in its due light, this ſuppoſed difficulty will vaniſh. The queſtion was aſked by the Lawyer out of a deſire to juſtify himſelf: he had learned to call no man neighbour who was not of the ſame ſtock and reli-

gion with himſelf: Samaritans he expreſsly hated, and juſtified his hatred, becauſe they were deſerters from the true worſhip, and deſpiſers of the temple which was in Jeruſalem. This great error our Lord was to wreſt from him, which was not to be done by battling his prejudices, and arguing upon the true ſenſe and meaning of the law: the Lawyer, not unaccuſtomed to ſuch exerciſe, would have held up the diſpute, and ſtood reſolute againſt any ſuch convictions: our Saviour therefore puts him a caſe, and ſtates it ſo, that his prejudices were all ſhut out, and could have no influence in the determination: a Jew therefore is put into the place of diſtreſs: *A certain man went down from Jeruſalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves.* Here could be no exception taken againſt the perſon. Had the Samaritan been placed in the ſame caſe, and his calamities painted in the moſt moving colours, he would have found no pity from the Jew, who would have excepted to his religion, and thought himſelf very much in the right to have been an enemy to the enemy of God: but when one of his nation was repreſented in miſery, he ſaw reaſon in every thing that was done for his relief. A Prieſt and a Levite are ſaid to paſs by and neglect him: theſe perſons ſtood in all thoſe relations to the diſtreſſed, which the Lawyer owned to be the juſt bonds and ties of neighbourhood: they were of his kindred, and they met at the ſame altar to worſhip the ſame God: he could not therefore but condemn their want of bowels to their brother. A Samaritan is repreſented as paſſing by, and ſhewing the greateſt tenderneſs and compaſſion to the poor Jew: this could not but be approved: even

the prejudice of the Lawyer carried him in theſe circumſtances to a right judgment; for, knowing how inveterately the Jew hated the Samaritan, he could not but the more admire and approve the Samaritan's kindneſs to the Jew. Upon this caſe our Lord puts him to determine which was neighbour to the man in diſtreſs; or, which is the ſame thing, which of the three acted moſt agreeably to the law of God, commanding that we ſhould *love our neighbour as ourſelf:* the Lawyer anſwers, *He that ſhewed mercy*; confeſſing that the Samaritan had fulfilled the law; which was condemning the Jewiſh expoſition, and his own prejudices: for if a Jew was rightly forbidden to ſhew kindneſs to a Samaritan, becauſe of the difference in religion between them, the ſame reaſon made it unlawful for a Samaritan to aſſiſt a Jew. Our Saviour approves his judgment, and bids him only apply it to himſelf, *Go thou, and do likewiſe*; that is, ſince you commend the Samaritan for acting like a neighbour to the Jew, do you learn to act like a neighbour to the Samaritan: for this is the true force of the word *likewiſe.* For a Jew to be kind to a Jew only, is not to do like the good Samaritan, who was kind not to a Samaritan only, but to a Jew alſo. And thus you ſee the caſe led to a full determination of the queſtion propoſed, and ſhewed that no reſtrictions were to be laid upon the law of God; that even thoſe whom he accounted as his worſt enemies, the very Samaritans, were entitled to the benefit of it, and ought to be treated with the love and kindneſs which is due to our neighbours.

From our Lord's conduct in this caſe, we may

learn how to apply to the paſſions and prejudices of mankind, and by what art truth is beſt and moſt ſucceſsfully introduced, where error has been long in poſſeſſion. Were it a defect in our reaſon and underſtanding that made us diſagree, and judge and act differently, in caſes where we have one and the ſame rule to go by, no human application could reach the diſtemper; ſince it is not in our power to enlarge the faculties which are bounded by God and nature. But our reaſon and our underſtanding are not in fault; they want only to be ſet free, and to be delivered from the bondage of paſſion and prejudice, to judge rightly in caſes of morality and natural juſtice. If you look into the world, you will ſee men as much diſtinguiſhed by their vices, as by the features of their faces. Few men have many reigning vices at once: covetouſneſs, well planted in the mind, will ſtarve out all other paſſions; it will ſuffer hardly any other vice to live by it. The ſame may be obſerved of luxury and intemperance, and of lewdneſs, and of ambition: where any of them flouriſh, they take up the whole man: other vices are admitted only accidentally, and at ſpare hours, or as they may be ſubſervient to the main inclination. I obſerve this, becauſe, upon examination, you will find that men's reaſon and judgment fail in the very ſame proportion that vice and paſſion prevail.

Did men judge perverſely in all caſes alike, we ſhould not eaſily aſſign any other cauſe but want of judgment and reaſon; ſince nothing leſs would account for the total abſence and defect of it: but when we find men to have reaſon in moſt caſes, and

to be dark only in ſome few; when we ſee them exerciſing their minds freely and impartially, generally ſpeaking, but in ſome few inſtances obſtinately bent to hug and to maintain a lie; it puts us to a neceſſary inquiry to ſearch out ſome other cauſe, that may anſwer this odd appearance, and account for a man's want of reaſon and judgment in one or two inſtances, who acts and judges as reaſonably as his neighbours in all others. Now, if from the experience of human life you find that a man's reaſon and his virtue forſake him in the ſame inſtances; that he judges perverſely in the ſame caſes in which he acts perverſely, and remarkably ſo in them only; this will teach you what it is that miſguides, or, rather, enſlaves the mind, and by what methods the freedom and liberty of reaſon may be reſtored. If the covetous man rightly condemns all vice, and perverſely defends his own: if the voluptuous man abhors covetouſneſs, fraud, and deceit, whilſt he looks on his own pleaſures as innocent and harmleſs, and can devoutly bleſs himſelf that he is no extortioner, that he does not devour the widow's houſe, and yet thinks himſelf under no great condemnation for ſeducing the widow's daughter, which is her richeſt treaſure: if the ambitious man equally and juſtly condemns both, and yet ſees no harm, no reaſon to be diſpleaſed with himſelf, for all the wild havoc which his ambition makes in the world: if theſe things, I ſay, are ſo, and that they are ſo daily experience witneſſeth, it is evident what bias influences the judgment of men, when they obſtinately maintain and defend the cauſe of error or of vice. It is *ſelf* that always lies at the bottom: it is not ſo

much the vice, as *ſelf*, that is to be defended; and if you can but ſeparate *ſelf* from the vice, the vice will ſoon fall under the common ſentence of reaſon, and be left to be condemned with its fellows.

By this honeſt, this holy art, our Lord convinced the Lawyer who put the queſtion of the text to him. He aſked the queſtion, intending that none ſhould be admitted into the number of his neighbours who were not nearly allied to him; of the ſame nation at leaſt. Our Saviour ſtates a caſe to him, and puts it ſo, that his prejudices were all thrown out and ſilenced. The conſequence was, that he who wanted to exclude almoſt all mankind from a right to his good offices, in a few minutes owns even the Samaritan, his moſt hated enemy, to be the Jew's neighbour; and, by owning and accepting the Samaritan's good offices done to the Jew under the relation of a neighbour, he confeſſed the Samaritan's right, in that relation, to expect and receive the good offices of the Jew.

By the ſame method the prophet Nathan made David, in the very height of ſin and extravagance, give ſentence upon himſelf and his iniquity. The wretched King had taken the wife of Uriah to his bed, and had ſlain the huſband by the ſword of the children of Ammon. When he received the meſſage of Uriah's death, which ought to have filled him with horror and confuſion, he ſent this comfort to the Captain of the hoſt, which, no doubt, his falſe heart had firſt adminiſtered to himſelf; *Let not this thing diſpleaſe thee, for the ſword devoureth one as well as another*: and ſo ſatisfied he was with his reaſoning upon this accident of war, as he was willing

to eſteem it, that he ſoon ſent for the unfortunate brave man's widow, and ſhe became his wife. In this ſtate of ſecurity and enjoyment the prophet Nathan comes to him: had he openly taxed him with the murder, perhaps the King had juſtified himſelf, and ſaid to the Prophet, as he did to his Captain, *The ſword devoureth one as well as another*; or perhaps the Prophet had been rebuked for his ſaucy intruſion, and been forced to fly the preſence of the angry King: but the Prophet came with a complaint to the King of a great oppreſſion, which a very rich man had been guilty of towards a very poor one. David was ready to hear and redreſs ſuch wrong; for this caſe ſtirred no prejudices; himſelf ſeemed unconcerned in it. The Prophet's caſe was this: A rich man had a friend come to viſit him; and for his entertainment he ſent and killed a poor neighbour's ſolitary ewe lamb, which had been bred tame among his children, and was a great fondling, though he had large flocks of his own, and many herds, which would have yielded him any entertainment for his friend; but he ſpared his own numerous flocks, and robbed his poor neighbour of his one lamb, to feaſt his friend. The caſe was hard in itſelf, and the Prophet had repreſented it with all the moving and tender circumſtances that could be thought on. David, fired at ſuch flagrant injuſtice and oppreſſion, ſwore, *As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing ſhall ſurely die.* When the King had paſſed ſentence, then the Prophet opened the ſecret, and ſaid, *Thou art the man:* the ewe lamb was the wife of Uriah, whom thou haſt taken from her huſband, though thou hadſt wives and concu-

nes in abundance: thou haſt not only robbed the or man of his one ewe lamb, but thou haſt added urder to thine oppreſſion; thou haſt killed the or man alſo; thou haſt ſlain Uriah with the ſword the children of Ammon. The King, upon this arge, had no retreat left to his juſtification: he at had declared the man ſhould die who had killed s poor neighbour's lamb, could not juſtify himſelf o had killed his poor neighbour, that he might e more eaſily enjoy his wife; and therefore he d nothing left but this plain confeſſion, *I have ned againſt the Lord.*

Thus our Saviour alſo, under the parable of an uſeholder and his vineyard, made the Jews bear itneſs to the juſtice of God, in rejecting their na- n from being his people. When he had repre- nted how ill the huſbandmen treated the Lord of e vineyard; how they abuſed his ſervants and de- oyed his Son; even the Jews could give righteous ntence in their own caſe, veiled under theſe fi- ures, and adjudge the wicked huſbandmen to de- ruction, and the vineyard to be let to better te- nts.

It is no hard matter to get truth out of men, if u can once get beyond their prejudices, and ſepa- te the truth from all perſonal views and intereſts; r reaſon is ſufficiently clear, where it is not cloud- l and obſcured by paſſion and affection. The hea- en moraliſts ſeem to be ſenſible of this, when they othe the moſt beneficial inſtructions in the dreſs of ble: the only reaſon of which is, that no man is ncerned in the ſucceſs of a fable, and therefore ll judge impartially; which, if the inſtruction

were brought home to him, and applied to his own caſe, he would not perhaps do. A paſſionate man will be reſtrained from his revenge by no prudential conſiderations; he deſpiſes them all; they are all the leſſons of cowardice, and the tokens of a mean ſpirit: and yet he never reads the fable of an horſe, who, to revenge himſelf, called in a man's aſſiſtance, and taught him how to mount, from which time he loſt all liberty, and has been a ſlave ever ſince, but he laughs at the horſe's folly, and his impotent deſire of revenge.

The conſequences from what has been ſaid are plain, and I ſhall but juſt touch them.

Firſt, It is evident that the true art of convincing any man of his error is to throw him as much as poſſible out of the caſe; for, the leſs a man is concerned himſelf, the better he judges. You are not to ſtir and fret his prejudices, but to decline them; not to reproach him with the error you condemn, but to place the error at a ſufficient diſtance from him, that he may have a true light to view it in.

Secondly, In private life, it is plain from hence, that innocence is the only true preſervative of reaſon and judgment: guilt will diſpoſe you to ſeek excuſes and ſubterfuges, and miſlead you in your opinion of yourſelf and your duty. When once you find yourſelf labouring to juſtify your actions, and ſearching for expoſitions that may ſuit your inclinations, from that moment you may date your loſs of freedom.

Thirdly, If you find yourſelf involved in the caſe you are to judge of, inſtead of ſeeking for new reaſons and arguments to form your opinion by, you had

much better look back, and reflect what ſenſe you had of this matter before the cauſe was your own; for it is ten to one but that judgment was much more free and impartial than any you will make now: or conſider, if the caſe admits it, what is the ſenſe of the ſober and virtuous part of the world; you may more ſafely truſt them than yourſelf, where your paſſions are concerned: at leaſt ſuppoſe your enemy in the ſame circumſtances with yourſelf, and doing what you find yourſelf inclined to do, and conſider what judgment you ſhould make of him, and ſo judge of yourſelf: by theſe means perhaps we may preſerve ourſelves from the fatal influences which vice and paſſion have over the reaſon and underſtanding of mankind.

DISCOURSE LVI.

ROMANS xiv. 16.

Let not then your good be evil ſpoken of.

IN deſcribing the condition of our Chriſtian warfare, St. Peter tells us, *If, when ye do well, and ſuffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God:* to this, ſays he, you are called by the example of Chriſt, who ſuffered reproaches willingly, and, *when he was reviled, reviled not again.* This is a duty, in which one would think there ſhould be no danger of any man's overacting his part. Reproach and contempt are not ſuch deſirable riches, that we need be warned againſt their temptations, or cautioned leſt we too earneſtly purſue after them. We are apt enough to ſhrink at the approach of calumny, and to invent plauſible excuſes for the neglect of a duty, which performed would expoſe us to envy or ill-will. What then means the Apoſtle by this exhortation, *Let not your good be evil ſpoken of?* Are we called by Chriſt to ſuffer revilings and reproaches? and, are we called by his Apoſtle to fly from them and avoid them? Our Saviour ſeems to ſpeak other language to us in his ſermon on the mount: *Bleſſed*

are ye when men ſhall revile you and perſecute you: and, if it be our happineſs to be reviled, how is it our duty to take care not to be evil ſpoken of for our good?

But ſuppoſe, however, that it is no way inconſiſtent with our Chriſtian duty to avoid the calumny and reproach of the world; yet ſtill is it in our power to ſtop the mouth of malice and wickedneſs? When we do our duty, can we help it if others will ſpeak evil of our good? Why are not they rather exhorted not to ſpeak evil of our good, than we not to let our good be evil ſpoken of? It is not in our power to govern other people's tongues: is it not enough therefore that the thing we do is good, but muſt it likewiſe lie upon us to ſecure our good from the attempts of malice and envy? Is it not ſufficient that we ſuffer patiently under the malice of wickedneſs, but muſt we partake in the guilt of it too; and ſhall it be imputed to us as a crime, that we let our good be evil ſpoken of?

Such reaſonings as theſe perhaps the text may ſuggeſt at firſt hearing; but, when maturely conſidered, it will afford excellent inſtruction for our conduct in the purſuit of thoſe things which are in themſelves truly good and praiſeworthy: it will teach us not only how to be good in ourſelves, but likewiſe how to be uſeful in the world, by exerciſing a truly Chriſtian prudence and addreſs in promoting the intereſt of virtue and religion.

To court oppreſſion and perſecution, to invite the world to miſuſe us for the ſake of our profeſſion, is far from being a duty to which the Goſpel has called us. It is neither for the intereſt of our reli-

gion, nor the glory of our Maſter, that we ſhould voluntarily expoſe either ourſelves or our doctrine to the hatred and contempt of the world: in both caſes our Saviour has given other directions; *Give not*, ſays he, *that which is holy unto the dogs; neither caſt ye your pearls before ſwine, leſt they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you*, Matt. vii. 6. And when he ſent his diſciples forth to preach, he expreſsly commanded them to *beware of men*; not only allowing, but requiring them to have a regard to their own ſafety, and cautiouſly to ſhift the dangers to which they were neceſſarily to be expoſed.

This may ſatisfy us of the lawfulneſs and expediency of guarding againſt the dangers that may attend the practice and profeſſion of religion in an evil world, and clear our way to the underſtanding the extent and meaning of the Apoſtle's advice, *Let not your good be evil ſpoken of.*

The rule is general, and extends itſelf to all parts of our Chriſtian converſation: it ſtands applied indeed by the Apoſtle to a particular caſe, which was matter of controverſy in the church of Rome at the time this letter was written to them: but as the rule does not ariſe out of the particular circumſtances of that caſe, there will be no neceſſity of conſidering it with reference to the diſpute which the Apoſtle had in his view; but we may deduce it from the general principles of Chriſtian prudence and charity in which it is founded. And, that we may proceed clearly to the point we aim at, I ſhall,

Firſt, Inquire what we are to underſtand the Apoſtle to mean by *our good.*

Secondly, Endeavour to ſhew that *our good* is often expoſed to be *evil ſpoken of* through our own indiſcretion; and, conſequently, that it is often in our own power to prevent it: from whence,

In the laſt place, will appear the reaſonableneſs of the duty enjoined us in the text.

Firſt, We are to inquire what we are to underſtand the Apoſtle to mean by *our good*. And here we may meet with different opinions: ſome, by *our good*, underſtand our religion, which is indeed every Chriſtian's chief good; and according to this ſenſe of the words the Apoſtle muſt be underſtood to exhort us to have a regard to the honour of the Goſpel in all our actions, to adminiſter no occaſion to the enemies of our religion either to deride or deſpiſe our holy calling. And thus the text amounts to an argument, or exhortation, to move us to a ſimplicity of manners and an inoffenſive behaviour, for fear leſt we bring a reproach upon our profeſſion. But the Apoſtle ſeems to aim at ſomething farther: his buſineſs here is not to deter us from the practice of evil, but to direct us in the uſe and practice of that which is good, that our virtue may be without offence, and ſecured from calumny and reproach: and *our good*, mentioned in the text, is not the topic from which the Apoſtle draws an argument or exhortation, but is the ſubject matter concerning which he is giving directions. According to this interpretation of the words, the text may be thus paraphraſed: Be not content with merely doing that which is in itſelf good and commendable, but look forward to the conſequences which are likely to attend it, and endeavour to prevent any miſchief

that may grow out of it to yourſelf or others, that your good may be inoffenſive and irreproachable. In this ſenſe it is that I propoſe to conſider the text; and ſhall now proceed,

Secondly, To ſhew, that our good is often expoſed to be evil ſpoken of through our own indiſcretion; and, conſequently, that it is often in our own power to prevent it.

There is no ſuch thing as being truly good and virtuous till we are got to be above the temptations of the world, and free from the ſervitude of courting its opinion: but then it is too common a miſtake for men to think, that to be above the temptations of the world is the ſame thing as to deſpiſe the world and all that belong to it: and hence it is that virtue often contracts ſuch a moroſeneſs, and becomes ſo untractable, that it can be of no public uſe or benefit, but is confined to its own cell, the poor honeſt heart that poſſeſſes it. Nor is this the only inconvenience: the cauſe of virtue itſelf often ſuffers by the zeal and indiſcretion of ſuch miſtaken votaries: they look with diſdain upon all the prudent methods by which goodneſs may be advanced, and cenſure them as the effects of worldly wiſdom and cunning; and, provided the thing they do be in itſelf juſtifiable, they are above conſidering the conſequences that may attend it: nay, the greater the inconveniences are which threaten them, the more eagerly they embrace them, eſteeming it to be the moſt generous part of virtue to ſuffer for that which is good. This ſort of inflexible goodneſs naturally runs out into diſdain and averſion, and makes men value themſelves more for hating a

knave than they would do for reforming him, and to look upon it as an higher degree of virtue to reproach men with their vices than it is to correct and amend them.

What ſucceſs muſt attend this method of propogating virtue and religion may be ſoon known, by conſidering the temper and diſpoſition of mankind. To vex and exaſperate men can ſerve only to make them ſtubborn in their vices and obſtinate in their opinions; and all that is got by it is to expoſe the good you do to reproach, and to give the enemies of religion occaſion to blaſpheme. Zeal is the nobleſt grace, when duly tempered with charity and prudence, and, whilſt it continues under their influence, it produces the nobleſt fruit; but, when it breaks looſe from theſe reſtraints, it grows wild and extravagant, and becomes the grief of wiſe men, and the ſport and laughter of fools.

This is one way by which men expoſe their good to be evil ſpoken of. Their miſtake lies in not rightly diſtinguiſhing between a ſervile compliance with the world, and a prudent behaviour towards it; and yet there is as much difference between them as between virtue and vice: one is the way which men who ſacrifice honour and conſcience to their intereſt make uſe of; the other is the method which wiſe and good men take to recommend the practice of virtue and religion. And what a wide difference is this? In the firſt caſe, to comply with the world, you muſt be like it, you muſt conform yourſelf to it: in the other, you treat the world civilly, that it may the more eaſily become like you; that you may gain upon it, and inſtil the principles of vir-

rue, which may be infuſed by gentle degrees, but cannot be obtruded by noiſe and violence.

Thoſe who are of too ſtiff a virtue to court the world into a compliance with that which is good, may do well to conſider how our Apoſtle is to be juſtified in the character he has given us of himſelf: *Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myſelf ſervant unto all, that I might gain the more. Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Chriſt,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means ſave ſome,* 1 Cor. ix. 19, *&c.* Into what a variety of ſhapes did he turn himſelf, to gain upon the affections of men, that he might the more eaſily gain admiſſion for the Goſpel of Chriſt? Had he fallen directly upon their infirmities and miſtakes, he might have fired their minds, and ſtopped their ears to his inſtruction. He knew that patience and gentle teaching would by degrees get the maſtery of their errors, and lead them, without tumult or oppoſition, to the acknowledgment of the truth; that their prejudices would wear out; and, as the light of the Goſpel began to dawn in their hearts, their affections would take a new turn of themſelves, which at preſent were not to be ſtemmed. He uſed the art of a ſkilful pilot, who chooſes to coaſt it along the ſhore when the tide runs too high in the channel, as knowing it to be not only

the ſafeſt, but the ſhorteſt way to the point he makes.

Yet thus to court the affections of men is by many thought below the dignity of religion: but where does this indignity lie? Ought not men to be made in love with virtue and religion? Yes, you will ſay: and how is that to be done? Muſt it not be by engaging their affections in the cauſe of religion? Undoubtedly it muſt. And is it then neceſſary to engage men's affections in the cauſe of religion? And is it yet an unworthy attempt to endeavour to engage them? How can theſe things be made to agree? But, if it muſt be allowed that it is neceſſary to apply to men's affections in the cauſe of virtue and religion, it will ſhew the reaſonableneſs of the Apoſtle's advice in the text, and the neceſſity there is of having recourſe to Chriſtian prudence and wiſdom to direct us in the practice even of that which is good: for all things have not the ſame appearance to all men; nay, the ſame object appears differently to the ſame man, as it is expoſed in different lights; which holds as true with reſpect to the eyes of the mind as of the body: and therefore it lies upon us to guard againſt any ill impreſſions that may be made upon others by the good we do.

This care not to offend is the foundation of civility and good-breeding in common life, and will likewiſe be productive of mutual love and condeſcenſion in religion: it will teach us to be tender of each other's infirmities, and to avoid the occaſions of giving offence, which men who have not this care upon their minds rather labour to ſeek and to improve. Let us but view the difference there will

be in one Chriſtian grace, when attended with this care, and when not: let the grace be zeal, which is in itſelf, without doubt, an excellent gift; but, where men have no regard how far they truſt or offend others, how raſh and intemperate does it grow, in reproaching not only the vices, but the follies and weakneſſes of mankind; how eaſily does it degenerate into cenſoriouſneſs, and tranſport men beyond all bounds of charity and diſcretion! The conſequence is, that it is immediately ſurrounded with enemies of its own raiſing, and ſuffers under the names of fury and uncharitableneſs. But, on the other ſide, where it is found in company with prudence, and joined with a care not to offend, it is a gentle and heavenly flame, which warms without ſcorching: it falls upon its right object, the honour of God, and the good of men, and confines itſelf to ſuch methods only as may beſt ſerve to promote both: it will therefore never run into any indecencies of paſſion, which are unbecoming the cauſe it maintains; nor will it provoke and exaſperate thoſe whom it labours to reform, as knowing what little benefit men can receive by being ill-treated. Thus will it ſecure itſelf from being evil ſpoken of, and appear with advantage in the eyes of all that behold it. But, farther,

Some there are who have ſo little regard to the ſecuring their good from being evil ſpoken of, that their zeal for good ariſes even from envy and ſtrife. This ſpirit is ſtill in being; and it is no uncommon thing for men to be ſpitefully good, and to delight in the opportunities of exaſperating others who differ from them: men often fall upon ſubjects for no

other reaſon but becauſe they know how diſagreeable they are to ſome of the company; and, to juſtify themſelves, they ſay, that men ought not to be aſhamed when they are in the right, or afraid of owning the truth; which are two very good reaſons very ſadly applied; for men ought to be aſhamed of making this uſe of truth, which is merely inſulting the prejudices of mankind, and not correcting them. It is a very unnatural effect of love for the truth, to labour to make others hate it; and yet what elſe can be expected from theſe meaſures? To make a reproach of the truth, and to upbraid men with it, is to place it in ſuch a light before them, that it muſt neceſſarily appear to them a frightful object. It is certain that men are never to be complimented at the expence of truth or religion; nor can too hard a name be given to the mean ſpirit that makes men always join in the opinion of their company; nor are the opportunities, which converſation affords, of juſtifying ourſelves and our opinions from the miſapprehenſions of others, to be neglected. It is mightily for the advancement of peace and truth that men ſhould rightly underſtand each other; and this is one of the beſt ends that is ſerved by converſation; and therefore there is the greater miſchief in perverting it, and uſing it as an opportunity of revenging ourſelves: the conſequence of it is very plain; it makes men ſeldom care to converſe with any but thoſe of their own opinion; which is the way to eſtabliſh error, and to propagate it for ever. There is a difference between beating a man with the truth, and endeavouring to convince him of it; and between raiſing his paſ-

ſions to oppoſe it, and preparing them to receive it. This is the true end of converſation, though the other is too often the uſe of it; and the miſchief is ſufficiently great, if we only conſider what a ſtubbornneſs in opinion men contract by being ſo unſeaſonably provoked.

But there is ſtill a farther miſchief: when men truly labour to promote truth, and recommend it to others, they always place it in its beſt light, and take care to obviate the miſapprehenſions of thoſe they deal with: but where they enter into a queſtion merely for oppoſition ſake, or for the pleaſure of expoſing ſomebody elſe, they care not how little he underſtands the truth, or how groſsly he miſtakes; for, the more violence and paſſion he ſhews againſt it, the greater the entertainment; and therefore, inſtead of obviating his doubts, ſtumblingblocks are laid in his way, and the thing is painted induſtrioufly in ſuch colours as are known to be moſt offenſive to him: and what is the conſequence? He for ever takes his meaſure of your opinion from this repreſentation of it, and goes away perſuaded that you could not anſwer the objections, which you would not: you have your entertainment for the preſent, and he his error, it is probable, for ever. And is not this wilfully to expoſe our good to be evil ſpoken of, and, for the ſake of an ill-natured diverſion, to ſacrifice the intereſt of truth and religion?

The ſame effect is often ſeen to proceed from a mixture of zeal and ignorance: in this caſe men often judge it abſolutely neceſſary to do or ſay the things they approve, when they are before thoſe who they know do not approve them: they look upon it

to be aſſerting the truth; and to do otherwiſe, in their opinion, is deſerting it. This was ſomething of the caſe which the Apoſtle had before him when he wrote the words of the text. The queſtion in the church of Rome was, concerning the lawful or unlawful uſe of meats forbidden in the law of Moſes: thoſe who held it lawful to uſe them were never more zealous of their liberty, or more certain to make uſe of it, than when they met at table with thoſe of another opinion: this gave riſe to many ſcandals and offences. The Apoſtle, who allowed the uſe of all meats indifferently, diſapproved this perverſe uncharitable uſe of them; and, among many other reaſons, gave this as one, *Let not your good be evil ſpoken of.* But to proceed:

Sometimes men expoſe their good to be evil ſpoken of out of pure pride and haughtineſs of temper: this is the caſe when men have ſuch a contempt for the world, as not to think it worth their while to guard againſt the miſapprehenſions of thoſe about them. They reckon it below their dignity to render any account of what they do, and a mark of guilt to deſcend ſo low as to juſtify their actions. But ſurely, if we eſtimate the thing fairly, it is betraying of that which is good to reproach, and laying of ſtumblingblocks in the way of the blind. The very reaſon why you deſpiſe the world, and diſdain to give any account to it of what you do, becauſe the world is weak and captious, and below a wiſe man's notice, is the reaſon why you ought to endeavour to ſatisfy it. This rule of the Apoſtle's has its riſe from the weakneſs of men; and the very end of it is to direct us how to walk with reſpect to

thoſe who are weak, and unable to judge of things ſo perfectly as we do. Do but read the firſt verſe of the next chapter, in which the Apoſtle ſums up the advice he had given, and you will ſee that the Apoſtle lays his foundation in the known or ſuppoſed weakneſs of men: *We then*, ſays he, *that are ſtrong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe ourſelves:* and when he adviſes us not to let our good be evil ſpoken of, what elſe is it but to adviſe us to guard againſt the weakneſs and miſapprehenſions of men? He knew ſurely that good could not be liable to be evil ſpoken of, but by being miſunderſtood; and therefore he can mean nothing elſe, in this charge, but that we ſhould condeſcend to the weakneſs of others, and keep our good out of the way of being miſunderſtood by them.

How much below a wiſe man you may think this conduct, I cannot ſay; but I am ſure it is not below a good man, who will think nothing below him that tends to the honour and advancement of virtue; and nothing more does ſo than to juſtify virtue and goodneſs in the eyes of the world. Things are capable of very different conſtructions; and all men cannot equally judge of the conſequences and tendencies of opinions and actions; and therefore it is a duty owing to yourſelf, your neighbour, and the truth, to fence your actions and principles againſt the miſapprehenſions of weak minds. Your own reputation, your neighbour's ſatisfaction, and the honour of truth, are equally concerned, and equally demand this juſtice at your hands.

Nor is any man, how great ſoever he is, above rendering an account of himſelf to the world. It is not true magnanimity or greatneſs of ſoul that makes men averſe to it, but a narrow-ſpirited inſolence and pride that poſſeſſes them, and teaches them to place their glory, not ſo much in the worthineſs of their actions, as in deſpiſing and contemning every body elſe. A generous virtue is open and free, harbours no ill deſigns, and therefore fears no diſcovery; and never appears more truly glorious than when it is moſt truly underſtood: it loves the light, becauſe its deeds are good; and is always ready to render an account of itſelf, becauſe it can always render a good one. Were this openneſs and plainneſs more practiſed in the world, perhaps it might prevent a great deal of that hatred and animoſity, which are founded in mutual jealouſies and ſuſpicions: I imagine this would be the conſequence, becauſe I verily believe that few men intend half the miſchief that they are ſuſpected of.

There are other inſtances to be given, in which men expoſe their good to be evil ſpoken of: when a man ſacrifices truth and honour to intereſt, and baſely deſerts the cauſe which he approves, truth itſelf often ſuffers, and others think there was but little in the profeſſion, ſince ſo little appears in action: but in this, and the like caſes, men may be more properly ſaid to expoſe themſelves to be evil ſpoken of than their good; for the world is generally ſo quick-ſighted as to know that ſuch treachery is to be charged, not upon the cauſe, but

the man: theſe inſtances therefore do not ſo immediately belong to the preſent ſubject. I proceed now to the laſt particular, which is to ſhew,

Thirdly, That as it is often in our power to prevent our good from being evil ſpoken of, ſo in many caſes it is our duty.

This duty may, I think, be deduced from theſe principles; the honour of God and of truth, the charity that is owing to our brethren, and the juſtice that is due to ourſelves.

The honour of God is chiefly conſulted by reconciling men's minds to the love of virtue and religion, by removing their prejudices, and gently drawing their affections to the cauſe of goodneſs: this is the moſt ſubſtantial honour we can pay our Maker, to *exalt his name among the people, and teach every tongue to confeſs his truth.* It is certain men can never love the thing they ſpeak evil of; and therefore the firſt ſtep to make men in love with virtue, is to remove out of their way all poſſible offences, to do nothing, not even that which is good, out of contention, which is the way to elevate the paſſions, and depreſs the judgment, and blind men from ſeeing and acknowledging the truth. In all human actions the paſſions and affections will have a ſhare; and therefore it is neceſſary to court them by all fair means even in the cauſe of virtue: and what honeſter method can be taken, than to ſecure our good from being evil ſpoken of? Good ought not to be evil ſpoken of; and therefore ought not to be expoſed to the hazard of it without neceſſity. An indiſcreet good man often does a great deal of miſchief in the world, and raiſes an oppoſition to

the good which he meant to recommend: our Saviour therefore, as a neceſſary qualification for preaching the Goſpel, exhorts his diſciples to be *wiſe as ſerpents, and innocent as doves.* Innocence is of abſolute neceſſity in a preacher of righteouſneſs: ſome degree of wiſdom cannot well be ſpared: the greater the degree is, the more effectually will it ſecure his innocence, and recommend it to the imitation of the world. A great many men are judged to want the innocence of the dove, when indeed they want nothing but ſome of the wiſdom of the ſerpent; and men are ſuſpected of very evil deſigns, and black intentions, when indeed their hearts are free from malice, and their indiſcretion is their only fault. This ſhews, however, how neceſſary it is, in order to promote the honour of God and religion, always to walk by this rule, and to take care *that our good be not evil ſpoken of.*

It will appear likewiſe to be a part of that charity which is owing to our neighbour: we know how much his happineſs depends upon approving that which is good; *Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee God:* ought we not then to labour to recommend virtue and religion to his choice, to render it acceptable in his ſight, and by that means lead him to taſte the fruit of the tree of life? And how is this to be done? Not by rendering our good odious and offenſive to him; not by making it matter of reproach and ſcandal to him; but by ſetting it forth in its native gentleneſs, without ſcandal or offence; that he may be aſhamed of nothing, but that he did not ſooner love and embrace it. Thus muſt the ſalvation of mankind be ſet forward; *Hæ tibi erunt artes:* let

ignorance and ſuperſtition triumph in reproach, ſupported by wilfulneſs and haughty pride; but let truth rejoice in meekneſs, and become all things to all men, that it may gain ſome. But, farther,

It is a piece of juſtice that we owe to ourſelves and our own character, to render our good irreproachable: when our good ſuffers, we muſt ſuffer with it, and partake in the reproaches that fall on it: and therefore it is prudence, with reſpect even to our own intereſt and credit, to avoid giving offence as much as poſſible. It is matter of doubt, whether it be juſtifiable in the good we do to have regard to our own reputation: to make it the end of what we do is certainly bad; for the applauſe of the world is not the end of religion: but a good man is capable of doing ſo much good by having a good reputation, that it is certainly his duty to conſult his credit and character in what he does: for this reaſon he ought to reſtrain himſelf in thoſe freedoms, which in the judgment of the world are unbecoming his character, though in themſelves they be innocent and harmleſs. But ſurely there cannot be a more innocent way of aſpiring to a reputation, than taking care that our good be not evil ſpoken of; than in providing againſt the miſtakes and miſinterpretations that others may make of what we do: and therefore this argument, in this caſe, may juſtly be allowed its full weight.

And thus you ſee of what great moment it is to render our good unſuſpected and free from reproach: it is the way to advance our own credit, to conſult the good of our neighbour, and to promote the honour and glory of God.

This prudent behaviour is not inconſiſtent with a ſteady and conſtant adherence to the truth; for the truth is not to be deſerted that it may not be evil ſpoken of, but it is to be practiſed without offence.

In matters eſſential to religion there is no room for compliance; and in matters of Chriſtian liberty there is hardly any room for denying it: where we are free, the greateſt deference is to be paid to the opinions, nay, even to the prejudices of others. This diſtinction is not of my own making; but we have the exception and the rule from the ſame hand; for the Apoſtle, in the verſe after the text, adds, *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.* Take the whole of the Apoſtle's admonition together, and you will eaſily perceive the meaning of theſe words. The diſpute was about the lawfulneſs of meats: *I know*, ſays the Apoſtle, *and am perſuaded by the Lord Jeſus, that there is nothing unclean of itſelf—but if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkeſt thou not charitably:* that is, I allow it is lawful for you to eat; but yet, if you eat with the offence of your brother, you offend againſt charity. *Let not then*, ſays he, *your good be evil ſpoken of; for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.* This being the caſe, forbear eating, when eating will give offence: for it is not neceſſary to your Goſpel obedience, or to the eſtabliſhing the kingdom of God, that you ſhould eat; for it is a matter of Chriſtian liberty, and you may act which way you pleaſe. From which it is plain, that, in matters that are neceſſary to the eſtabliſhing the kingdom of heaven, we are not at the ſame liberty to pleaſe and humour

men: for the reaſon the Apoſtle gives in this caſe, why it ought to be done, is, that the kingdom of God conſiſted not in it; which is by implication an exception to the rule, and amounts to ſaying, This advice which I give you, of forbearing things which are offenſive, extends only to matters of Chriſtian liberty; for where the kingdom of God is concerned, you muſt be content to follow Chriſt, and us his Apoſtles, *through good report and evil report.*

DISCOURSE LVII.

NUMBERS xxiii. 10.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.

THERE is ſomething very affecting in theſe words, and apt to engage us upon the firſt hearing to become parties to the good wiſh contained in them. Whatever our preſent thoughts, views, and inclinations are, yet when our eyes are called off from the proſpects of the world, and fixed upon the laſt point of life, and we ſtand as it were beholding ourſelves under the arreſt of death, and juſt ready to expire, we want no arguments to direct our choice to what is beſt for ourſelves. Theſe circumſtances carry conviction with them; and how indiſpoſed ſoever we are to live the life of the righteous, we are willing to die his death, and that *our laſt end ſhould be like his.*

There is a compariſon implied in the words of the text, between the caſe of the wicked and the caſe of the righteous, which the mind readily ſupplies. The compariſon is ſtated under ſuch circumſtances as throw out all prejudices and partialities,

and bring only the merits of the cauſe on both ſides into judgment. You are called upon to behold the wicked and the righteous, both at the point of death, and to ſay which condition you would chooſe for yourſelf: in this view, the pleaſures and allurements of the world on one ſide, the ſuppoſed difficulties and hardſhips on the other, are equally ſet aſide: virtue and vice are brought naked to the bar, clothed only in their own natural features, without colour or diſguiſe; and, being thus placed before you, your judgment is deſired. We have no exceptions to take in behalf of virtue to any judge; let the moſt corrupt give ſentence, yet corruption ſhall not prevail; but virtue ſhall be juſtified out of the ſinner's mouth, whilſt he wiſhes to *die the death of the righteous, and that his laſt end may be like his.*

It may ſeem perhaps, that we have but little confidence in the cauſe of virtue under all other circumſtances and conditions of life, when we defer the judgment to the laſt moments, and bring the wicked and the righteous to the very doors of death, before we venture to aſk your opinion upon their ſeveral conditions: it may be thought unfair too, ſo to ſtate the caſe as to exclude all the pleaſures and enjoyments on one ſide, all the difficulties and diſcouragements on the other, which are the very conſiderations that are known to weigh moſt with the generality of mankind, and to leave nothing but the proſpect, whether certain or uncertain, of a future ſtate, when every thing is removed out of the contrary ſcale, which might ſerve, as in experience we find they do ſerve at other times, to balance againſt ſuch hopes and fears: it may be ſaid too, that it is

no very great commendation to virtue, that men ſhould prefer the hopes it offers to the fears of iniquity, when all conteſt is over in other reſpects, and at a time when nothing is left but mere hope and fear; for who would not prefer the moſt uncertain chance of being happy to the leaſt degree of fear of being miſerable, or even to the thoughts of falling into ſilence and perpetual ſleep?

Were theſe exceptions well founded, it would take much from the weight of the compariſon laid before us in the text: but the truth is, that there is no time or circumſtance of life in which virtue may not bear being compared with vice, the paſſions and prejudices and corruptions of mankind being moved out of the queſtion.

The words of the text, in their firſt and moſt natural ſenſe, lead us to compare the wicked and the righteous, not only in their lateſt hours, but in the whole courſe and circumſtances of their life: they ariſe from the contemplation of the happineſs and proſperity of the people of Iſrael, and their future greatneſs and ſecurity in the land of promiſe, compared with the miſery of the idolatrous nations, given up to ſin and ſuperſtition, and therefore devoted to ruin. *The people*, ſays the propheſier, *ſhall dwell alone, and ſhall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the duſt of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Iſrael? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.* And in the next chapter, *When he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and ſaid, Amalek was the firſt of the nations; but his latter end ſhall be, that he periſh for ever.*

Theſe two places help to expound each other; for, as the prophecy relating to Amalek was completed in the temporal deſtruction of that people, ſo by parity of reaſon the prophecy concerning Iſrael imported the temporal happineſs of that nation. It was denounced againſt Amalek, *that he ſhould periſh for ever*; that he ſhould be cut off, and leave no poſterity behind him: but to Iſrael a long continuance of great increaſe is promiſed; *Who can count the duſt of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Iſrael?*

If we add to this the remark of the learned Biſhop Patrick, that the original words, which our tranſlators render, *Let my laſt end be like his*, may properly be rendered, *Let my poſterity be like his*; it will give us farther reaſon to acknowledge that temporal proſperity was not excluded from the propheſier's thoughts, but was contained in his wiſh, as the peculiar lot and inheritance of the righteous.

The other ſenſe of the words, which looks beyond the limits of this world, and conſiders the wicked and the righteous diſtinguiſhed by their merits in another ſtate of life, has of ancient times been aſcribed to the text: nor need we be much concerned to determine between the two expoſitions; ſince both fairly ariſe from the words before us, both are agreeable to the apprehenſions, and, as far as experience teaches, to the experience of mankind, and both have a foundation in reaſon and nature.

That *righteouſneſs exalteth a nation*, that *ſin* is not only *a reproach*, but alſo a weakening to *any people*, are truths ſo univerſally received as to want no proof. All lawgivers, in all times, have thought ſo, and

made it their buſineſs to cultivate virtue and juſtice, temperance and frugality, and to diſcourage the contrary vices. Philoſophers and moraliſts have been in the ſame opinion, and have taught, with one conſent, that the virtue of the people is the ſtability of all governments, and the true ſource of public proſperity. Practice and experience have, in all ages, anſwered to the truth of theſe ſpeculations. If we conſult the memoirs of the moſt renowned nations, which have made a figure in the world, we ſhall find that they roſe to greatneſs by virtue, and ſunk into nothing through vice; that they got dominion by their temperance and probity of manners, and a ſerious regard to religion; and that when they grew diſſolute, luxurious, and deſpiſers of religion, they became ſlaves to their neighbours, whom they were no longer worthy to govern.

Beſides the natural tendency which there is in virtue to make nations great and happy, there is this farther to be conſidered: if we believe the being of a God, and have juſt notions of his attributes, and think him at all concerned in the government of this world which he made, we muſt neceſſarily conclude that virtuous nations are his peculiar care, and under his immediate protection; that he counſels their counſellors, and teaches their ſenators wiſdom; that he goes forth with their armies, and covers them in the day of battle, and brings them home crowned with victory and peace.

Notwithſtanding the general conſent of men to this truth, that virtue is the true foundation of the happineſs and proſperity of public ſocieties, yet they differ much in opinion and practice in the choice

and purſuit of happineſs for themſelves: and yet there is no doubt but that the ſame thing which is neceſſary to the happineſs of a kingdom, is alſo neceſſary to the happineſs of private families and private men; unleſs we can ſuppoſe that the body politic may be in a very flouriſhing condition, whilſt every member of it is in miſery and diſtreſs. As a nation cannot be ſaid to be healthy, when the private families of which it conſiſts are viſited with plague and peſtilence; ſo neither can it be ſaid to be rich and happy, when the members are poor and miſerable: from whence it follows, that whatever is neceſſary to the public happineſs is neceſſary alſo to the private happineſs of particulars, conſidered in themſelves, and in the more contracted relations of life.

Since then we have the expreſs conſent of all men that virtue is the true way to public happineſs, we have, in conſequence, their confeſſion that private happineſs muſt be obtained in the ſame method: how is it then that men are ſo inconſiſtent with themſelves, as in their own caſe to prefer the momentary pleaſures of vice to the ſolid happineſs which ariſes from virtue? How come they to think, that the ſame thing, which will make all others miſerable, will make them happy?

This difference ariſes not from the nature of the things under conſideration, which continue always the ſame without alteration, but from the paſſions of men, which in one caſe are excluded, and admitted in the other with all their force to bias the judgment. When we conſider what is good for other men, their paſſions have no weight upon our

underſtandings, and we deliberate calmly what is right for them; but when we conſider for ourſelves, all our paſſions are awakened, and often prove too ſtrong for our reaſon and underſtanding. The people are happy, you ſay, who are obſervers of juſtice, temperance, and chaſtity. Very well: and why would it not be as happy for you to obſerve the ſame rule as it is for them? Can reaſon, do you think, ſhew a difference in the caſe? No: but when a man judges for himſelf, he can lay aſide his reaſon, and give himſelf up to his paſſions and corrupt inclinations. It is a common obſervation, that it is much eaſier to give good inſtructions than to follow them; and there is much truth in the obſervation: but this ought to be no prejudice to the cauſe of virtue; for when a man ſpeaks reaſon at the ſame time that he acts againſt it, he ought to be taken as a ſtrong witneſs for the truth.

A reaſon may be demanded perhaps, why we prefer the judgment of a man when he chooſes happineſs for others, to the judgment he makes when he chooſes for himſelf. Do we not know that men are always trueſt to themſelves, and never more ſincere than when their own intereſt and happineſs are concerned? Should a number of men conſent to a law for ſuppreſſing vice and immorality, and yet indulge themſelves in the very enjoyments which they forbid to others; whatever we may think of their opinion concerning the expediency of virtue to the public, yet we muſt not ſuppoſe them to judge that life may be rendered comfortable and happy, by the practice of virtue; ſince ſuch an opinion would be

utterly inconſiſtent with the meaſures which they purſue in order to their own happineſs.

But if this way of arguing is allowed, there is but one law for man and for beaſts: reaſon makes no difference in the caſe; for the happineſs of both conſiſts in the mere gratifications of ſenſe: a concluſion ſo abſurd, that there is no man unreaſonable enough to embrace it. When a ſickly and vitiated appetite craves unwholeſome food; who is in the right? the patient, who is eager to gratify his appetite, or the phyſician, who ſtands between him and the deadly experiment, and preſcribes ſafer, though leſs grateful remedies? The caſe is the ſame in the compariſon between virtue and vice: the ſenſual man has a continual fever upon him; and we can no more judge what will render a man truly happy by obſerving the choice he makes for himſelf, than we can learn the true cure of a diſeaſe by obſerving the cravings of a diſtempered appetite. If ſenſe only is to be judge of the true meaſures of human happineſs, in vain is it that we have reaſon given us for our direction: it can ſerve only to increaſe our ſhame; for a brute without reaſon is a much more honourable creature than a brute with it.

But we have no reaſon to decline the compariſon between the pleaſures of vice and the calm enjoyments of virtue: let us therefore take a nearer view of the two conditions, and ſee whether there be not reaſon to wiſh that we may live the life of the righteous, as well as to die his death.

As to the good things of life, the wicked can make out no peculiar title to them: riches and ho-

nours may be held and enjoyed by the righteous as well as the wicked. They differ indeed extremely in the uſe they make of the good things of the world: and this being the only difference in this reſpect, the only queſtion in this view is, whether a man is happier in the enjoyment of a large fortune, when he applies it to the purpoſes, and uſes it within the bounds of virtue, or when he makes it ſubſervient to all the ends and pleaſures of vice? Or, if you remove the fortune out of the caſe, and carry the compariſon into another condition of life, the queſtion then will be, whether the difficulties of life, which attend upon mean circumſtances, are more tolerable to a virtuous or a vicious man; and which of the two can produce the beſt ſupports againſt the outward evils common to both?

If we allow the vicious man to have a greater ſhare of ſenſual gratifications, we allow him at once all the advantage he can claim for himſelf; and ſince he beſt knows how pleaſant ſuch enjoyments are, let him ſet his own value upon them. But though we allow him to rate his own pleaſures according to his own luſt and reliſh of them, yet his taſte will not enable him to judge of the happineſs or unhappineſs of thoſe who deny themſelves the ſame liberties. It is the virtuous man's buſineſs not only to abſtain from the pleaſures of vice, but to ſubdue the paſſions of it; and when he has done ſo, he renders himſelf capable of much nobler enjoyments, which are a perpetual fund of delight and ſatisfaction to his mind. So that take the men in conjunction with their deſires and appetites, and there is reaſon to believe, that, even with reſpect to

the preſent enjoyments of life, virtue has infinitely the advantage over vice.

But if we look into the conſequences of their different ways of living, ſuch conſequences only I mean as a little time produces and makes manifeſt to the eyes of the world, the caſe will grow to be very clear. View the perſons in themſelves: on one ſide you may ſee health and vigour attending upon virtue; on the other, pains and diſeaſes following cloſe at the heels of vice. But if you look ſtill nearer, and examine their ſtates of mind, the difference will appear yet greater: on one ſide you may ſee an undiſturbed reaſon, ſurrounded with a conſtant calm ſerenity, and enjoying itſelf in all the proſpects that are preſented to it by things paſt, preſent, and to come: on the other ſide are diſturbed imaginations, eager deſires, perpetual uneaſineſs, reflections half ſtifled, and a mind ever labouring with unpleaſant thoughts of the time paſt, and the more unwelcome proſpects of the time to come. Theſe are natural and conſtant effects; and ſuch they are ſurely in which the happineſs of human life is very much concerned. You may value the pleaſures of the body as you pleaſe, and deſpiſe the better part, the mind; but you are a reaſonable creature whether you will or no, and your reaſon will have the laſt influence in making you either happy or miſerable. If you lay in matter for uneaſy thoughts and reflections, it is but ſtoring up miſery for yourſelf, a miſery from which all the real or fancied goods of the world cannot deliver you. The pains of the mind are never-ceaſing torments: the wounds of the body may be cured; but for the

wounds of the ſpirit the world affords no ſalve: they will feſter and grow deſperate, till they waſte both body and mind. The trueſt touchſtone by which we can prove the things which are conducive to our happineſs, is to conſider how they will operate upon our minds for the remainder of our life: for inſtance, you have an opportunity of getting ſome great advantage by doing ſome vile thing: whilſt you look only at the advantage, and think over all the ways in which it may be ſerviceable to your pleaſure or ambition, ſo long the temptation may be ſtrong; but ſet it at a little diſtance from you, and the caſe will be altered. Suppoſe the thing done, and the advantage gained; and then put yourſelf into a poſture of looking back upon the whole tranſaction, and ſee what comfort will ariſe from the reflection: can you rejoice in the ſight of woods and parks, if every ſight of them muſt call to your mind an innocent man, whom you ruined in order to obtain them? Such a thought muſt ever be attended with a ſecret abhorrence of ourſelves; and how happy the man is who lives under a continual diſpleaſure with himſelf, let any one judge.

This ſecret diſpleaſure, which wicked men conceive againſt themſelves, is inconſiſtent with any real enjoyment: ſo that ſin lays the foundation of miſery, and lays it ſo cloſe to us that we can never remove it. Add to this, that vice renders men odious and contemptible, not only to themſelves, but to all the world beſides. There is ſo much ſenſe of virtue left, and will be as long as men continue to be reaſonable creatures, that, whether we like it for ourſelves or no, we muſt needs like it for

all others: and therefore a vicious man will always be a contemptible man; a circumſtance that will always make him an unhappy man; for it is impoſſible for a man to bear contempt eaſily, when he knows that he deſerves it. So that conſider the wicked man as he ſtands with regard to himſelf and his own judgment, and as he ſtands with regard to the world and the common opinion of mankind, and in both views he ſeems given up to miſery, and to be the object of his own and the common hatred.

But there is ſtill another ſcene to be opened, which will preſent us with a larger proſpect, and ſhew us far greater miſeries in reſerve for the wicked. Hitherto we have conſidered his caſe with reſpect only to this world and the natural effects of his vice; but aſk him, and he will tell you that this is but an imperfect deſcription of his condition; that he has other fears about him, and ſuch forebodings of future miſery as are ſufficient to poiſon all the pleaſures of life, were they free from all other corruption. He ſees that in this life all things come to an end, that the wicked and the righteous equally go down to the grave; but what new diſtinctions may ariſe hereafter, anſwerable to the natural hopes and fears of the mind, he hates to remember, and yet has it not in his power to forget. Theſe thoughts are his perpetual plague: no ſooner is a paſſion ſatisfied, and the pleaſure over, but it appears again in a ghaſtly form, and ſpeaks to him in the language of Iſrael's King, *Know, that for all theſe things God will call thee into judgment.*

Say, however, and it is all that the wicked have

to ſay, that ſuch imaginations may be deluſive, and ſuch fears may be vain: but yet, weak as you ſuppoſe theſe fears to be, we muſt be much weaker than we are, before we can get rid of them; that is, we muſt loſe our reaſon and underſtanding, before we can forget that there is a God who will judge the world in righteouſneſs. Theſe are natural thoughts, the plain reſult of that reaſon which is born with us; and, be they true or be they falſe, they have a real effect upon our preſent happineſs: and if they are true, as I truſt we ſhall all one day be convinced that they are, they will add eternity to the miſery of the wicked.

We meet ſometimes with ſuch hardened ſinners as are proof for many years againſt all conſiderations of this ſort; but their hardneſs is no ſecurity to them againſt the miſery of theſe natural reflections: vice will ſoon impair their ſtrength, and bring down the pride of their hearts; at leaſt, time will bring them within ſight of the grave; and when weakneſs and infirmities lay hold on them, or death draws near to execute his commiſſion, they awake as one out of a dream, and their long ſilenced fears begin to ſpeak with double terror. And what a condition is a man in, when there is nothing paſt that he can reflect on without ſelf-condemnation, nothing to come that he can contemplate without horror and diſtraction of mind? Inquire of him in this condition, what profit there is in the pleaſures of vice? Aſk him, whether the fears of futurity are all idle dreams? And as you like his anſwer, follow his example.

It is a vain attempt to deſcribe the miſery of a

ſinner, who lies expiring with all his ſenſes about him: the imagination cannot furniſh ideas ſtrong enough to paint out this ſcene of wo; and the experience of it may we never know!

There is in all men a natural averſion to death: the beſt are not free from it: but this is an evil that has its remedy. Thought and reflection will furniſh us with many arguments to balance againſt this fear: a truſt in God, and a comfortable expectation of an happy futurity, will enable us to perform the laſt act with applauſe, and to give up ourſelves with courage and with joy into the hands of our Redeemer. By theſe ſupports the righteous man, after a life of ſolid comfort, may find comfort too in his death, and wait with patience and tranquillity for that ſummons which he truſts and believes will call him to perpetual joys.

Could we but rightly balance this difference between the wicked and the righteous in their lateſt hours, it would ſufficiently determine which has made the happier choice: but take the whole together; conſider the wicked man in his life and in his death, how he lives deſpiſed by himſelf, and contemned by the world, without thinking of God, or thinking of him with dread, and at laſt expires under the utmoſt torments and agonies of mind, and we ſhall feel great reaſon to join in the petition of the text, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.*

DISCOURSE LVIII.

PSALM cxix. 165.

Great peace have they which love thy law.

IN expounding this and ſuch-like paſſages of Scripture, and in applying them to themſelves, men are apt to commit two great miſtakes; which, though they are of a very different kind, in their conſequences are equally fatal and pernicious. On one hand, they think they can never ſufficiently enlarge the promiſe of the text, or build too great expectations upon the aſſurances of peace that are given to them; eaſily ſuffering themſelves to be perſuaded, that under the general name of peace is to be comprehended whatever the world calls good: and becauſe the peace which they moſt affect, and which moſt ſtrongly poſſeſſes their imaginations, is that which the world ſuppoſes to be placed in power and affluence, in an eaſy fortune, and an healthy body, they fondly conclude, that the promiſe of peace infers the promiſe of theſe good things, which they eſteem as the genuine and neceſſary effects of peace. On the other hand, to ſtrengthen and ſecure their title to theſe things, which they ſo paſſionately

admire, they conſider the condition to which the promiſe of peace is annexed in quite a different view. Here all their force is employed to limit and reſtrain, and to expound away the rigour of this article, and to ſhew upon how eaſy terms, upon how ſmall a portion of righteouſneſs and obedience, a man may be numbered with thoſe who love the law of God, and to whom the aſſurances of peace are given. Under this head they make very reaſonable allowances to themſelves upon account of the great perfection of the law, which renders it extremely hard to practiſe; upon account of their own weakneſs and infirmities, through which they can hardly avoid often miſtaking, and often offending againſt the law; and upon account of the mercy of God, which will incline him to overlook their errors, and to accept their general good meaning, and their imperfect performance, for righteouſneſs and holineſs. After theſe deductions are made in the proportion that beſt pleaſes them, and that beſt ſuits their own condition, they can, without difficulty, find themſelves to be within the articles of the peace which the text promiſes; and then they are in eager expectation of being put into the poſſeſſion of thoſe good things, to which they think they have ſo well made out their title.

But as error naturally produces error and falſehood, ſo theſe miſtakes are in their kind exceeding fruitful, and directly lead men to miſapprehenſions of God, themſelves, and religion: for as long as men conceive the peace and proſperity of the world, and the enjoyments of it, to be neceſſary attendants upon virtue and holineſs, they will be apt to judge

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ndly, Who they are that may be ſaid to *love*
' *of God.* And,

Thirdly, To illuſtrate and confirm the truth of this propoſition, *Great peace have they which love thy law.*

Firſt, then, it is neceſſary to conſider the nature of the peace here ſpoken of in the text.

It is plain the Pſalmiſt makes this obſervation upon the experience of his own circumſtances and condition, and the many trials he had of the favour and protection of God; and yet to come at this concluſion he does not ſet forth the great ſtate and ſplendour of his kingdom, or the triumphs and glories of his reign, or deſcribe any circumſtances of the outward and worldly proſperity he enjoyed; which yet he ought to have done, had he intended to infer that worldly peace and ſecurity, and an exemption from the pains and evils of life, were the never-failing bleſſings and reward of holineſs and obedience. His life perhaps offered as ample matter to build ſuch an obſervation on as any man's whatever: he was, by the ſpecial appointment of Providence, drawn out of obſcurity, and raiſed to the throne of Iſrael: his life, often attempted by men, was as often guarded by Heaven; and the dangers to which he was expoſed ſerved but to convince him how much he was the care of the Almighty. When proſperity weakened his virtue, and at laſt betrayed him into the crying ſins of murder and adultery, he ſuffered not only under the laſhes of a guilty conſcience, and the torments of a wounded ſpirit, but was humbled likewiſe under the afflicting hand of Providence: his glory was darkened, and his afflictions were many and ſore. Upon his repentance the clouds again diſperſed; and he grew

happy, as he grew obedient. Thus it ſeemed good to God to deal with him: but ſo far is the Pſalmiſt from conſidering theſe circumſtances of outward glory, and making a general rule from his own caſe, that in the text he regards only that peace which he felt and enjoyed during the courſe of his afflictions and perſecutions; which peace he found was the undivided companion of faith and obedience in all, even the moſt afflicting circumſtances of life. Do but mind what ſteps he takes to come at the concluſion of the text: he ſets out with deſcribing the evil treatment he met with in the world; *Princes*, ſays he, *have perſecuted me without a cauſe:* in the next place he declares what it was that ſuſtained him under theſe perſecutions; *But my heart*, ſays he, *ſtandeth in awe of thy word: I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great ſpoil: I hate and abhor lying; but thy law do I love. Seven times a day do I praiſe thee, becauſe of thy righteous judgments.* This love of the law of God, this conſtancy in the diſcharge of his duty, he found was a perpetual ſpring of joy and comfort in his mind, amidſt all the varieties and unpromiſing circumſtances of life: and this leads him to ſing the triumphs of virtue and religion in this exalted ſtrain; *Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing ſhall offend them.*

From hence it is evident, that nothing was more diſtant from the Pſalmiſt's thoughts, than to promiſe outward peace or temporal proſperity to the practice of virtue; ſince he ſpeaks of that peace only, which the righteous enjoy in the day of their affliction: and for this reaſon he adds, *and nothing ſhall offend them*; which would have been very impro-

perly added, had he ſpoken of temporal peace before, in which there is nothing apt to offend any man; and therefore not to be offended at it is no peculiar prerogative, or juſt diſtinction of the righteous man's tranquillity. But to enjoy a peace which ſets us above the power of evil; which places us out of the reach of fortune; which inſpires us with courage in the midſt of danger; which opens our eyes to look through the gloomieſt ſcenes of ſorrow to the bleſſed hope of future glory; which eſtabliſhes our hearts in a patient expectation of God's deliverance, ſo that nothing can terrify or diſmay us; is that which the world can never give, and which can only proceed from the bleſſed Spirit of God, whoſe province it is to confirm the faithful to the end, and ſo to arm their faith, that *nothing can offend them.*

This is that peace of which the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, and which is the peculiar lot and inheritance of the righteous, of him who loveth the law of God. Great is the gift, and happy is the man who can attain to it: but it requires pains and labour, and a conſtant watchfulneſs over ourſelves, to prepare our hearts to receive ſo noble a gueſt: for, as long as we carry this fleſh and blood about us, and have the affections and appetites of it to incite us to evil, the ſolicitations of pleaſure to move us to worldly enjoyments, the temptations of honour and intereſt to ſhake our integrity, ſo long it muſt be difficult to us to reſign our wills to the conduct of the law of God, and entirely to love what entirely thwarts the bent and inclination of our corrupted nature: for it is not enough ſo only to love the law as to approve and admire it, and to purſue the righteouſneſs of it

with faint deſires and diſtant wiſhes, which is ſuch a love as every ſelf-condemned ſinner has for it; but our love muſt be active and fruitful in the works of the law, and ſatisfied with nothing leſs than the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of the holineſs and righteouſneſs which the law preſcribes. And this will more fully appear under the ſecond head; which was,

To conſider who they are who may be ſaid to *love the law of God.*

In this Pſalm we often find holy David declaring how much he loved the law of God: *In thy law,* ſays he, *is my delight: I have choſen thy precepts: my ſoul hath kept thy teſtimonies, and I love them exceedingly: I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold: I truſt in thy word: I have hoped in thy judgments:* and many other like expreſſions, full of regard and affection to the laws of God, occur frequently. David then loved the law of God: May we therefore, from his character, ſafely draw the picture of a man who loves the law of God? By no means; for though at the time of penning this Pſalm his heart was right with God, yet at other times he had highly provoked and grievouſly offended him. David was a different man at different times; and, when he was a lover of the law of God, he heartily condemned and lamented what he was before, and bleſſed God for viſiting him with ſuch afflictions as ſerved to awaken his conſcience, and make him ſee and forſake the errors of his ways. Thus, in this very Pſalm, he confeſſes, *Before I was afflicted I went aſtray*; and immediately after, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy ſtatutes:*

and ſoon after he acknowledges the mercy and goodneſs of God to him in afflicting him, *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulneſs haſt afflicted me.* What therefore David in himſelf condemned when he loved the law of God, cannot be thought to be conſiſtent with the character of one who loves the law of God. It is a vain and imaginary comfort therefore which ſinners raiſe to themſelves, out of the worſt part of the character of David, and other holy men; endeavouring, by their example, partly to defend, and partly to excuſe their ſins. There is a comfort, indeed, which ſinners may draw from hence: theſe examples are a great encouragement to repentance and the forſaking of ſin; ſince here they may ſee how readily God embraced the returning prodigal. From hence they may hope, that though their ſins be red as ſcarlet, yet ſhall they be waſhed white as ſnow; though they, like David, are grievous ſinners, yet, like him, may they become lovers and beloved of God, if, like him, they repent and condemn their iniquities. This is the inſtruction which the Scripture holds forth to us in theſe examples: but as long as men make uſe of them to ſooth and flatter their conſciences in the quiet enjoyment of ſin, ſo long do they abuſe the goodneſs and mercy of God in ſetting forth to us theſe inſtances of his patience and long-ſuffering towards ſinners.

But though the example of David in all parts of it is no ſafe direction to us, yet his inſpired writings are; and we need go no farther than this Pſalm for the righteous man's character: in the very beginning of it he deſcribes him to be a man *undefiled in*

the way, who walks in the law of the Lord, who keeps his teſtimonies, and ſeeks him with the whole heart; who does no iniquity. In ſpeaking of himſelf, the firſt good thing he found to ſay was his repentance: this was his firſt ſtep towards becoming a lover of God: *I thought,* ſays he, *on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies: I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.* His next ſtep was to forſake his wicked companions, and to aſſociate with ſuch as feared the Lord: *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.* The reſolutions he had formed of perſevering in holineſs he thus expreſſes: *Thy teſtimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: I have inclined mine heart to perform thy ſtatutes always to the end.* In the verſes before the text, and where he is deſcribing that ſenſe of religion which was the ſource of all the peace and joy which he found amidſt his bittereſt perſecutions and afflictions, and which afterwards, in the words of the text, he comprehends under the general term of loving the law, he thus ſpeaks: *My heart ſtandeth in awe of thy word: I rejoice at thy word: I hate and abhor lying: ſeven times a day do I praiſe thee.*

You ſee then what firm reſolutions of obedience, how conſtant a perſeverance in holineſs, how regular and frequent acts of devotion, how irreconcileable an hatred to ſin and wickedneſs, muſt meet together to complete the character of the man who loves the law of God. To hate and abhor ſin, to love and delight in the law of God, are expreſſions which imply no ſmall degree of perfection: they ſuppoſe the main difficulties of religion to be conquered, the ſtruggle with ſin to be over, the paſſions and affec-

tions to be ſubdued to holineſs and obedience, and a man's heart to be in the intereſt of virtue, and to lead the way to all the good he does. There are ſome who, upon different views, ſuch as are ſuggeſted merely by fear, or by intereſt, or preſent conveniency, keep out of ſin, and make a tolerable ſhew in the performance of the duties of religion: but, alas, their work is labour and ſorrow: they have no pleaſure or reliſh in what they are about; and ſo far from taſting the peace which the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of, that religion is their toil and ſlavery, the work of a maſter whom they cannot love, and whom they dare not anger, and whom therefore they ſerve unwillingly, without cheerfulneſs or delight. Theſe are they who are fond of every pretence which may help to eaſe them of any part of their duty; whoſe hearts are perpetually pleading the cauſe of ſin, and inventing and maintaining all the excuſes which may in any wiſe ſerve to cover and protect it: whereas they who delight in the law of God, whoſe hearts are ſeaſoned with an honeſt undeſigning virtue, want not to be excuſed from the work they take pleaſure in. They who hate and abhor ſin want not to have the approaches to it made eaſy, or cleared from dangers, ſince they have no appetite to embrace the monſter, which is their averſion.

Hence it is that St. John, in one of his Epiſtles, has given this mark to know whether we love God or no; *His commandments are not grievous.* If we like the work, and take pleaſure in obedience, it is the beſt evidence that we love the Maſter; but it is not to be thought that we love him, as long as we

hate and repine at his ſervice. And this connection between the love of the law and the love of God was evidently in the Pſalmiſt's view; ſince he affirms of one what, properly ſpeaking, belongs to the other: for the peace and joy which good men feel ariſe from the love of God, from a ſure truſt and confidence in his favour, from an unſhaken hope of inheriting his promiſes, if they faint not when they are tried. It is this only which can make them triumph in the evil which virtue expoſes them to, which can give them peace amidſt all the tumults of the world, and preſerve the harmony of their ſouls when all things are out of courſe, and maintain the tranquillity of their minds even whilſt nature is diſſolving in them.

It is not to be imagined that when the Pſalmiſt penned the text his thoughts were no higher exalted than to a Stoical rapture in praiſe of virtue; or that he fetched his comfort from ſuch uncertain, ſuch diſputed principles: no; his mind was fixed on God, *from whom cometh our ſalvation*, and in whom alone the faithful have peace and reſt for evermore. This is the foundation he builds on, as will appear,

Thirdly, Where we are to illuſtrate and confirm the truth of this propoſition, *Great peace have they which love thy law.*

How little peace and ſatisfaction of mind the enjoyments of the world afford, every man in his own condition knows, what pleaſures or comforts ſoever he may imagine there are in the conditions of life which are above him, and which he has never experienced: ſo that, allowing men to judge as far as

their knowledge extends, (which is but a reaſonable confinement,) there is but one opinion concerning the pleaſures of the world, which men of all ranks and degrees conſent in; That there is no laſting peace to be had from them, no ſecurity in them againſt ſorrow and vexation, no comfort under preſent evils, nor any aſſurance againſt future. But were there that enjoyment in all conditions, which moſt men think there is in ſome, yet ſtill it would be very imperfect, and liable to frequent interruptions, unleſs ſupported by hopes of religion: for as long as men continue to be of the ſame nature which they now are, ſo long their minds will be ever looking forward beyond the limits of this world, and foreboding to them the good or evil that attends them hereafter, when they ſhall be ſtripped of all their preſent ſupports and poſſeſſions. The pleaſures of this life cannot ſuſtain the ſpirit of a man againſt theſe apprehenſions, but muſt loſe their own heat by degrees, from the continual damps which will ariſe from ſuch reflections.

So that let the world be as valuable as it will, we diſpute it not with you; yet ſomething elſe is wanting to give peace to the mind, ſomething that can calm the fears and raiſe the hopes for futurity; and this nothing but religion can do, which entitles us to his protection, before whom things paſt, preſent, and to come bow down and obey. If we have the aſſurance of his love and favour to us, nothing can diſturb us; we ſtand upon a rock, againſt which the winds and waves may ſpend their fury, but ſhall ſpend it in vain; for it is immoveable. This aſ-

ſurance of God's favour is but one and the ſame thing with what we call a good conſcience: for what force is there in a good conſcience to give us peace, but only this, That it is our teſtimony, that we have faithfully and diligently ſerved our God; which is the ground of our hope and confidence in him? And when we are thus armed, and can without reſerve profeſs, *I have loved thy law, O God, and my delight hath been therein*; we ſhall be ſuperior to all the evils of life. The very circumſtances which give terror to the worldly man, and fill his breaſt with horror, will give eaſe and comfort to us. When he thinks of the ſhortneſs of his life, and the ſpeedy account he muſt give to God, his blood retires to his heart, and hardly there maintains its poſt: but when the good man's thoughts are ſo fixed, his heart ſprings with joy, and all his hopes begin to bloom: the proſpect of that bleſſed day ſo fills his mind, and engages all his thought, that he is loſt in pleaſure and delight, and forgets all the pains and calamities of life: not the tyrant's frown, nor the executioner who waits for blood, can rob him of his peace: he looks on them as meſſengers ſent by Providence to deliver him from his pain, and to carry him to the haven of his reſt, where his ſoul longs to be. This, this only was the art by which ſaints and martyrs overcame the world, and looked upon racks and gibbets, and every form of death, but as ſo many doors opening into the kingdom of reſt and glory. By the ſame art ſtill do good men triumph under all the trials of fortune: by this they preſerve their peace in their lateſt

hours, and reſign with joy their ſpirits into his hand who gave them.

This is a trial which mortals muſt undergo: the time will come, and is now at hand, when we muſt part with all that our eyes delight to ſee, and when we muſt go to render an account to our great Judge: in that day, where ſhall we look for comfort, and whom ſhall we call to our aſſiſtance? Your parting friends will have nothing but tears and ſighs to lend you. Then happy is the man whoſe truſt hath been in God; who can with patience, full of hope, wait the coming of his Lord, and obſerve with comfort the degrees by which he haſtens to his end. It is worth your while to lay the foundation of this peace betimes, that you may be able to look that day in the face, at which, even at a diſtance, the ſtouteſt heart may tremble: for it is not courage, but folly, not to think of death with ſome concern, ſince ſo much depends from that moment.

And were we ſure of nothing elſe, in conſequence of our faith and obedience, but to ſlip quietly out of the world, without ſuffering the agonies which guilty ſinners feel, and which none can deſcribe; yet ſtill our labour would not be quite in vain: but, ſince this peace is but the forerunner of eternal peace, the earneſt of future glory and immortality, it is worth all our pains to deny ourſelves in this world, to take up our croſs and follow Chriſt, to labour to do the whole will of God, that we may inherit that peace which belongs to thoſe, and thoſe only, *who love the law of God.*

DISCOURSE LIX.

PSALM cxix. 63.

I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

THERE is nothing more uſeful or neceſſary in the purſuit of virtue and holineſs, and indeed in the whole conduct of our lives, than to obſerve the rules and methods by which men of approved righteouſneſs, who are ſet forth to us as patterns and examples in holy Scripture, did attain to that perfection, which made them the ſhining lights of the world, and the declared favourites of God. If therefore we look into ſuch examples, and from thence draw rules for our own uſe, we ſhall be ſure of two very great advantages; namely, that the rules we preſcribe ourſelves will be both proper and practicable; practicable, becauſe drawn from the practice of men like ourſelves; and proper, becauſe we aim at no other end than that which good men before us have attained to by the uſe of theſe very means, and, conſequently, for the attaining of which theſe rules have already by experience been found to be proper.

This diviſion of the 119th Pſalm, from which

the text is taken, ſets before us the ſeveral ſteps by which David recovered himſelf from the ſin in which he had been involved: in the firſt verſe he declares his choice, *Thou art my portion, O Lord*; and his reſolution to purſue that choice, *I have ſaid that I would keep thy word:* this he knew by ſad experience that he was not able to do, without the aſſiſtance and ſupport of God; and therefore the next ſtep was to apply for his aſſiſtance, *I entreated thy favour with my whole heart.* Having thus prepared himſelf, he ſet diligently to examine his heart, and to form reſolutions, and immediately to put thoſe reſolutions into practice; *I thought on my ways: I turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies: I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.* This was a good beginning, and theſe very promiſing reſolutions; but to ſecure them there was need of patience and courage, and faith towards God. The way that leads to life is narrow, and beſet with dangers; and we begin in vain, unleſs we are prepared to endure hardſhip like good ſoldiers of Chriſt. The next thing therefore he mentions, and which we are to learn from him, is ſteadfaſtneſs when we are tried: *The bands of the wicked*, ſays he, *have robbed me; but I have not forgotten thy law.* He then reſolves on a conſtant and uninterrupted devotion towards God: *At midnight I will riſe to give thanks unto thee, becauſe of thy righteous judgments.* After this follow the words of the text; *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*

At firſt ſight this ſeems to be but a little thing to mention, after ſo many great attainments ſpoken

of before: after he had remembered his holy reſolutions, his immediate and uninterrupted purſuit of them, his conſtancy and ſteadineſs under affliction, his perpetual devotions, what ſhould lead him to fall ſo low as to add, that he was careful to keep good company? What elſe could lead him to it but his own experience, which had taught him that this care was the great preſervative of all his other attainments, without which they would ſoon waſte away, and leave him once more an eaſy prey to the ſoft allurements of vice? He knew and had felt how great the contagion of ill company was; and therefore with reaſon adds, in the laſt place, that which was his greateſt care, the avoiding the ſociety of wicked and voluptuous men; a ſnare in which he had once already almoſt periſhed, and in which he had been entirely loſt, had not God ſent his afflicting angel to terrify and awaken his conſcience, which was ſtupified with ſenſual pleaſures, and ſleeping the ſleep of death. So ſenſible was the holy Pſalmiſt of this danger, that he not only reſolved for himſelf to avoid it, but made it his early care to forewarn his ſon of it: and ſuch impreſſions did the repeated admonitions of his father make upon the mind of Solomon, that in the book of Proverbs, when he comes to mention this neceſſary advice of ſhunning the company of wicked and evil men, he no longer ſpeaks in his own perſon, but, being full of the image of his father when he delivered the inſtruction, introduces him giving the advice to him, his ſon: *Hear, ye children,* ſays he, *the inſtruction of a father, and attend to know underſtanding: for I was my father's ſon, tender and only-*

beloved in the ſight of my mother. He taught me alſo, and ſaid unto me, Let thine heart retain my words; keep my commandments, and live. And ſoon after follows, among his father's precepts, this: *Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men: avoid it, paſs not by it, turn from it, and paſs away.*

But what need is there, you will ſay, to look far for this advice, ſince it is of all others the moſt obvious, and an inſtruction which all parents give to their children as well as David? It is true, they do; and for that reaſon it is commonly looked on as advice fit only for children: and young people hardly think themſelves men till they have broke looſe from all reſtraints of this kind, and ſhewn the world that they are at liberty to chooſe the worſt of company for themſelves, without being called to an account for it. And this weak ambition of ſhewing themſelves to be men, and at their own diſpoſal, every day betrays youth into ſuch hands as lie in wait either for their ſouls or their eſtates; as if the only way they had to convince the world that they are in their own power, were to do that for themſelves which every body knows no friend would do for them.

But, to remove this prejudice againſt the advice implied in the text, I deſire you would conſider, that though David gave this inſtruction betimes to his ſon, yet he himſelf, in his more advanced years, and under his greateſt improvements in virtue and holineſs, thought fit to lay it down for himſelf as a rule to be obſerved in the conduct of his life; as a great ſecurity to his virtue, and defence of his in-

nocence and integrity: *Depart from me*, ſays he, *ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God*, ver. 115. He hardly thought it practicable to aſſociate with evil doers, and yet to keep the commandments of God; as is plain from the reaſon he gives, why he would have the evil depart from him; *For*, ſays he, *I will keep the commandments of my God:* which would be no reaſon, were there not a moral impoſſibility of keeping the commandments of God, without departing from evil doers. As long as men are in a ſtate of trial, that is, as long as they are in this life, they cannot arrive at ſuch a pitch of perfection as may make it ſafe for them to expoſe themſelves unneceſſarily to the temptations of vice, and to, the greateſt of temptations, the conſtant inſinuations of wicked men. The reaſonableneſs of the Pſalmiſt's practice deſcribed in the text, and of the rule therein implied, muſt be deduced from the conſideration of the great danger of the contrary practice, in keeping ill company, and from the great advantage of contracting friendſhips with the good.

But, before I enter into this argument, I muſt obſerve to you, that none are concerned in it but ſuch as have a ſenſe of religion, and a due regard to virtue; for theſe are the two things in danger from ill company: and it is certain, that ſuch as have no regard either to virtue or religion are not within the reach of any arguments drawn from the dangers which threaten them. Upon this topic therefore I can only ſpeak to ſuch as have an awe of God, and a ſenſe of their duty upon their minds; and ſuch I hope it will not be hard to convince of the

great danger there is in contracting friendſhips and familiarities with men who have proſtituted their minds and their bodies to the ſervice of ſin. For,

Firſt, Let it be conſidered, that no reſolutions which we can form to ourſelves of keeping clear from the pollutions of the company we keep can give us any ſecurity of preſerving our innocence and virtue: ſuch reſolutions are often carried into bad company, but ſeldom or never come off whole; for, when the foundation upon which ſuch reſolutions ſtand is undermined, they muſt neceſſarily fall to ruin. You reſolve againſt ſin, becauſe you have a ſenſe of the heinouſneſs of it, and the evil conſequences which attend it; but it is great odds but this wears off by conſtantly converſing with ſuch as have learnt to make a mock of ſin, and can talk of their own and others' vices with a great deal of humour and raillery. When once you come to reliſh this ſubject, and to find ſport and entertainment in that which ought to give you horror and averſion, it is but an eaſy ſtep to practiſe what you thus far approve: and when once you are giving way, and inclining to yield to the ſolicitations of vice, your evil genius will ſoon furniſh you with many excuſes, and many ſuggeſtions to encourage you. It will be no hard matter for you to imagine that your fears are the mere prejudices of education; and the example of your friends, who ſin and fear not, will ſtrengthen the imagination; and your heart, your treacherous heart will ſay to you, Behold they ſin, and no evil happeneth unto them. Thus ſeduced, and thus betrayed, you are left an eaſy prey to ſin; your reſolutions fall before the prevail-

ing influences of pleaſure, in the arms of which you fall aſleep, perhaps never more to wake again to your ſenſe and reaſon, till the laſt trumpet calls you, with all your ſins, to ſtand before the judgment-ſeat of God. But farther,

Secondly, Suppoſe all theſe unhappy circumſtances ſhould not meet to puſh on and complete your ruin; yet even the opportunities and advantages for ſin, which an ill acquaintance affords, are of themſelves great temptations. Men are not always alike upon their guard: their virtue is not at all times equally ſtrong: and it is the happineſs of good men, who are unacquainted with the ways of wickedneſs, that in their weakeſt ſtate, when they are moſt tried with temptations, they want the ſkill and knowledge of ſinning. This guard you certainly loſe to your virtue and innocence by entering the ſocieties of wicked men: they will always be ready to ſecond your temptations, and make the way to ſin eaſy and practicable: they will, as far as in them lies, prevent the preventing grace of God, and rob you of the benefit of it: they will watch your weakeſt hours, that they may triumph in your fall, and have the malicious pleaſure of ſeeing you become like one of them. Were I ſubject to ſudden and violent efforts of paſſion, I would not venture myſelf in a man's company who I knew would clap a ſword or a piſtol into my hand in the height of my rage, and rejoice to ſee the miſchief and extravagance of my fury: but this is the very choice, which every man makes for himſelf, when he courts the friendſhips and acquaintance of wicked men. You are a man ſubject to paſſions and temptations;

you have inclinations to evil, which you are not always ſure of controlling: whenever they attack you, your beſt refuge is to reaſon, and thought, and prayer: why then will you put yourſelf into ſuch hands, which you know will never ſuffer you to enjoy theſe advantages; which will leave you no time to think, but will drive you on to follow the preſent evil paſſion, till it raiſes a flame that will conſume and deſtroy you?

Thirdly, It is on all hands acknowledged that there are many difficulties in the practice of religion, even when we call in all the aſſiſtance, and take all the advantages that may be had: and in the nature of the thing it is neceſſary it ſhould be ſo; ſince we are called here to a ſtate of trial, to give proof of our virtue and faith, and ready ſubmiſſion to the will of God; in doing of which, if there were no difficulty, there would be no trial. Now whoever conſiders this, and that upon the conſequence of this trial our hopes, our happineſs, ourſelves depend, muſt needs think it extreme folly in any man who ſhall refuſe any helps that may be had towards making his work eaſy to him; or who ſhall voluntarily expoſe himſelf to any difficulties that may render the iſſue of his trial more doubtful and uncertain: and this every man confeſſedly does, who lays himſelf open to the art, and cunning, and deadly inſinuations of evil men, who are induſtrious in the bad cauſe they ſerve; and, as the wiſe King expreſſes it, *They ſleep not except they have done miſchief; and their ſleep is taken away unleſs they cauſe ſome to fall: they eat the bread of wickedneſs, and drink the wine of violence.* And if you partake

the bread and the wine, it will not be long be-
re you take ſhare in the wickedneſs and violence
it procure them: for that which you eſteem per-
ps the moſt innocent employment of your com-
nions, their living in ſplendor, and in all the de-
acy of profuſeneſs, and ſpending their time in
xurious eaſe and forgetfulneſs, leads naturally to
other exceſſes of vice and lewdneſs; for when
e fulneſs of meat and drink has driven out
ought and care, in the room of them there ſprings
a blind brutal courage, which neither fears God
r regards man.

Even this ſenſual indulgence, diſtinct from the
iſchievous conſequences that attend it, is that
hich will expoſe us to the wrath and judgment of
od: *Riotous perſons and drunkards* are numbered
ith thoſe who *ſhall not enter into the kingdom of
even:* it is a crime that is heightened by a kind
ſelf-murder, deſtroying the man which was
rmed after the image and likeneſs of God; diveſt-
g him of ſenſe and reaſon, and every thing elſe
at was to diſtinguiſh him from the beaſts of the
ld, and leaving him even in a worſe condition
an they, a mere helpleſs and uſeleſs carcaſe.
hat a life does that man lead, who waſtes half
s time in thinking only how he may be without
ought the reſt of the day! whoſe ſhort mornings
e ſpent in contriving the exceſſes of the night,
id his waking hours employed in preparing him-
lf for a new lethargy and the ſleep of intem-
rance!

Should you therefore only propoſe to ſhare theſe
joyments with the libertines, and to keep a ſtrict

hand upon yourſelf as to all other kinds and degrees of wickedneſs; yet even this is deſtructive of the hopes of religion. If you bring but a taſte and reliſh with you for theſe pleaſures, uſe and cuſtom and example will ſoon make you a proficient: and you will wonder perhaps, when it is too late, to find yourſelf loſt in ſuch exceſſes as you never once thought of looking into. Your cheerful nights, and the heavy mornings which follow them, will indiſpoſe you for thought and reflection; and the ſenſe of religion, which lives and is nouriſhed only by the exerciſe of thought and reaſon, will gradually decay: the comforts of an innocent mind, which uſed to warm your ſoul with delight, and make it ſpring forth with joy into the contemplations of God and of futurity, will all forſake and leave you; and in the room of them will ſucceed miſgiving fears and doubts full of miſtruſt, evil ſuggeſtions, and jealous apprehenſions of God and of yourſelf; till at laſt you are forced to fly for refuge to thoſe repeated acts of intemperance, which at firſt you only taſted as tranſient diverſions. And when once this comes to be the caſe, that you are afraid of yourſelf and your own thoughts, and forced to fly from the preſence of your own mind, nothing can ſave you but the more than ordinary grace of God, which whether you will deſerve, or no, you yourſelf ſhall judge.

But the mercies of God are without meaſure, and, like the ſun, *riſe upon the evil and the good, on the juſt and the unjuſt:* perhaps then he will look down on you, and awaken you once more to ſee your danger and the evil of your ways. This is the beſt

thing which can befal you: but, could you be ſure of this, there is no encouragement in it to enter into the ſocieties of wicked and profligate men: for, alas, you little think what miſery, even upon this ſuppoſition, you are preparing for yourſelf: for, when you are immerſed in ſenſuality, the gentle and the kind calls of the Spirit will not awaken you; rougher methods are grown neceſſary, becauſe your ſenſe of feeling is too far gone to be affected with ſoft ones: fire and ſharp knives can only reach the feeling of a man grown ſtupid in a lethargy or an apoplectic fit; and therefore they only muſt be applied. In ſpiritual diſtempers the ſame method is uſed by the wiſdom of God: how was David called back to himſelf? By grievous afflictions and heavy judgments; by uncommon misfortunes, which only could raiſe him to ſee his wretched ſtate: and is it worth our while, for any pleaſures of ſin, to make it neceſſary for God to ſend miſery and affliction to dwell with us; to bring ourſelves into ſo deſperate a condition, as to want ſo deſperate a remedy?

And yet the external evils and afflictions, which by theſe means we ſhall call down upon ourſelves, will be but one part, and a light part of our miſery: for when we come with eyes open to ſee the danger of our condition, to behold hell gaping wide to receive us, and that there is nothing to keep us from preſent ruin but the ſlender thread of life upon which we hang, what fears, what torment, nay, what deſpair will poſſeſs our minds! When we look back upon the courſe we have run, and ſee with unprejudiced eyes the wickedneſs we have

committed; when we number the nights and days ſpent in the ſervice of ſin, the injuries done to men, and the indignities offered to God; where ſhall we begin to repent, or with what courage ſhall we ſet about a work which ſeems too large to be compaſſed in the little time we have left ourſelves to work in? And, when we do begin, how unpleaſant muſt the work be to us! with what confuſion ſhall we lift up to heaven our offending hands and eyes! with what tremblings of heart implore the mercy we have long deſpiſed, and petition for that grace which often perhaps we have ridiculed and ſet up to be a ſport for fools! Believe me, there is great difference in the religious work of an innocent, virtuous man, and of a returning ſinner: and you cannot make a worſe bargain for yourſelf than to ſin upon the proſpect of repentance: no pleaſures can recompence you for the change you make. To approach the throne of God with filial confidence and joy, and to appear before it with the fear of ſelf-condemned criminals, are very different ſtates. None but thoſe who have felt the ſinner's pains, the remorſe and anguiſh of mind which attend him in every ſtep, can truly judge of this matter: and from ſuch experience God defend us all!

Upon the whole then, ſince the danger of aſſociating with wicked men is ſo evidently great; ſince we hazard nothing leſs by it than ourſelves, our immortal ſouls, and all our hopes of future glory; and ſince, though we ſhould recover from their ſnare, the conſequences as to this world abound

with certain pain and miſery, and as to the next but with uncertain hopes; let us with holy David ſet ourſelves to ſhun this danger, and with him reſolve *to be companions of them who fear the Lord and keep his precepts.*

DISCOURSE LX.

PART I.

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 18.

For the things which are ſeen are temporal; but the things which are not ſeen are eternal.

THE motives to obedience in all religions are thus far the ſame, that they depend upon the belief of another inviſible world, and the different ſtate and condition of good and bad men in it: for though it has been maintained, with ſome ſhew of reaſon, that virtue is its own reward, and that man's chief happineſs would conſiſt in the practice of it, though there were no other rewards annexed to it, yet this, ſuppoſing it to be true, is by much too narrow a foundation to build religion on; for this could influence only men of abſtracted thought and reaſon, who are in compariſon a very inconſiderable part of mankind. The generality of the world live by ſenſe, and take their meaſures of happineſs not from the remote concluſions of reaſon, but from their preſent feeling, from the impreſſions which are made on them by the things which they deal and converſe with every day; and the rewards and puniſhments of religion are calculated to this

ſenſe and feeling, excepting only that they are diſtant, and not capable of being made the preſent objects of ſenſe: for the puniſhments denounced in the Goſpel againſt the unrighteouſneſs of men, are ſuch as nature recoils at; ſuch as, according to the ſenſe the world has of miſery and pain, are inſupportable evils; and the only reaſon why they operate ſo weakly upon the minds and affections of men is this, *that they are not ſeen.* The ſame may be ſaid of the rewards of the Goſpel: they contain the very happineſs that nature thirſts after, which is life and pleaſure for evermore: but neither can our eyes ſee theſe rewards; and therefore they fall ſhort of raiſing men to that degree of virtue and holineſs which in reaſon they ought to do.

The advantage which the things of this world have in this reſpect is not to be diſſembled: they play and ſport before the ſenſes: the man of thought and reflection cannot but ſee them; and the man of no thought ſees nothing elſe. This advantage the Apoſtle ſeems to acknowledge, by ſtyling the things of this world *the things which are ſeen,* and the rewards of the Goſpel *the things which are not ſeen.* In this lies all the force and ſtrength of worldly temptations and pleaſures; for, were the enjoyments of this world and the next equally remote, there could be no competition between them. This moſt men would find to be true, would they but obſerve a little what paſſes in themſelves and others. There are few but would be well content that that part of their life which is paſt and gone had been ſpent in virtue and ſobriety: they find no comfort in recol-

lecting the lewd frolics and extravagant vices of their youth; yet ſtill they cannot reſiſt the preſent temptations of pleaſure, but go on adding to the account of their folly and ſin. And is not this a deciſion of the queſtion? Does not reaſon determine againſt the world and the enjoyments of it? And is it not mere ſenſe that turns the ſcale of the world's ſide? If it be true now, that you do wiſely in preferring the pleaſures of life to the hopes and expectations of futurity, it will then be true fifty years hence, that you did wiſely in chooſing this world, and renouncing the pretences to heaven; for truth is always the ſame: and yet, if you live to ſee that time, it is great odds but that you judge otherwiſe, and condemn yourſelf of folly and indiſcretion for all your paſt vices and ſinful pleaſures. This is a judgment which we ſee men make every day: they purſue the things that are preſent; but no ſooner are they gone, but they condemn themſelves, wiſhing they could recall the time, that they might apply it to better purpoſes. And whence ariſes this difference, but from hence; that in one caſe reaſon is excluded by ſenſe and the prevailing power of preſent objects, but in the other caſe is free and unreſtrained, and judges from the truth and nature of things? Throw out ſenſe and appetite, and let the cauſe be heard at the bar of reaſon; and the queſtion then, between *the things which are ſeen*, and *the things which are not ſeen*, will be reduced to theſe two points:

Firſt, Whether we can have ſuch ſufficient evidence for the exiſtence of the things not ſeen, as may make them capable of being brought into competi-

tion with the things which are ſeen, the exiſtence of which, in this queſtion, is out of doubt?

Secondly, Whether the value of *the things that are not ſeen* be ſo great, that we ought in prudence to forego the enjoyment of *the things which are preſent with us?*

There are ſeveral ways by which we ſatisfy ourſelves of the exiſtence of things without us: the chief of theſe is ſenſe. This evidence extends to this world and the things of it: and though ſome have taken great pains to doubt of the exiſtence of things which they ſaw and felt, yet it may well be queſtioned, whether ever any man did indeed arrive to that perfection of ſcepticiſm? This evidence may be ſtyled the ſtrongeſt in one reſpect, as it moſt univerſally affects mankind, who much more readily receive the reports of ſenſe, than the concluſions of reaſon. Not but that the evidence of reaſon in ſome caſes is altogether as ſtrong and concluſive for the exiſtence of things not ſeen, as ſenſe is for the things which are ſeen. This is manifeſt in the proof of a firſt Cauſe; where, from the viſible works of the creation, the being of an eternal Cauſe is proved to a demonſtration, from ſuch principles as ſenſe and reaſon cannot reſiſt. So likewiſe, from the teſtimony and credit of others, we arrive to a certainty of the exiſtence of ſome things which they have ſeen, but we have not: which evidence is properly the evidence of faith, and may be ſo circumſtantiated as to admit no doubt or ſcruple. Upon this evidence men act in their deareſt concerns in this world; and are as well ſatisfied of the exiſtence of ſome perſons and places which they never ſaw, as

they are of the perſons and places they every day converſe with. And from hence it follows, that it is no manner of proof or preſumption that things do not exiſt, becauſe they are not ſeen; for there are ſeveral ways of being ſatisfied of the exiſtence of things; and ſeeing them is but one way: and things which admit not of this proof may admit of another: and therefore it is great weakneſs to ſuſpect the reality and exiſtence of things merely becauſe we do not ſee them.

And yet the greateſt piece of wiſdom that the voluptuous man has to boaſt of is founded in this prejudice: he thinks it wiſdom to be on the ſureſt ſide, and not to part with a certainty for an uncertainty. The things of this world he ſees and feels; and in renouncing them he is ſure he renounces what might afford him certain pleaſure and enjoyment: but he has not this notice nor evidence of future things: they lie out of the way of his ſenſes; and therefore he looks upon them to have much leſs of certainty in them than the preſent objects of life; and concludes very ſolidly, that it is beſt to make ſure of ſomething, and not to forego his preſent poſſeſſion for the diſtant hope of enjoying the uncertain bleſſings of futurity. Now ſenſe is the meaſure of his certainty; or elſe how comes he to take it for granted that there is more certainty of the things which are ſeen than of the things which are not ſeen? His ſenſes only prove to him, that he lives at preſent in this world: they cannot poſſibly prove to him, that he ſhall not live hereafter in another. So that the evidence of ſenſe reaches but to one ſide of the queſtion, to aſſure him

of his preſent being; and yet from this evidence he concludes in prejudice to the other world; which is very abſurd, ſince the evidence of ſenſe cannot, one way or other, affect the belief of future rewards and glories. Now in all compariſons men ought to weigh the reaſons on both ſides: but the comparing and preferring viſible things before inviſible, for the ſake of the evidence of ſenſe, is comparing and preferring one to another upon ſeeing only the reaſon of one ſide; for ſenſe only extends to viſible things, and has nothing to do with inviſible: and therefore the judgment that men are apt haſtily to make in this caſe, when brought to the teſt of reaſon, muſt appear to be groundleſs and precarious.

Since then, in the queſtion between things viſible and inviſible, it is evident that ſenſe can judge but of one ſide; it follows, that ſenſe can be no rule of judging in this diſpute: for a rule muſt be the common meaſure of the things to be eſtimated, and applicable to both; but ſenſe is applicable to ſenſible objects only, and therefore can be no rule in any queſtion between the things that are, and the things that are not, the objects of ſenſe.

Allow ſenſe to prove, as ſtrongly as you would have it, the exiſtence of this world, and the things of it: but how can that affect the belief of another world? The exiſtence of this world will not prove that there is no other world. That you live now is no argument that you ſhall not live hereafter. And therefore the evidence of ſenſe for this world ought to be no prejudice againſt the belief of another.

The advantage of this evidence of ſenſe is great, becauſe it is the firſt that men come to the uſe and

application of; and by the conſtant and familiar uſe of it, they learn to depend upon it, and truſt to it in all caſes. It is much later that men come to the uſe of reaſon: and this evidence of reaſon they have leſs occaſion for, and ſtill uſe it leſs than they have occaſion: ſo that they are not equally acquainted with the certainty of this evidence, as they are with the demonſtrations of ſenſe; and therefore are ſeldom ſo perfectly ſatisfied with the deductions of reaſon as with the reports of ſenſe. This is the true ſtate of the queſtion between the evidence of ſenſe and the evidence of reaſon, and the preference the world gives to the deductions of one and the other.

Now, if there can be no evidence for unſeen things, which may be of equal weight with the evidence of ſenſe; then indeed the things which are not ſeen can never be made ſo evident as to ſtand in competition with the things which are ſeen. But the means by which we arrive to the knowledge of things which we do not ſee, are reaſon and faith; and theſe may afford an evidence equal to the evidence of ſenſe.

There are many things which can be known only from reaſon, which yet are as well received as any report of ſenſe. We ſee many productions and works of nature every day, the cauſe of which is ſecret and remote, and not diſcoverable by the ſenſes; and yet no man doubts but that all theſe effects have cauſes. You can no more ſuppoſe, againſt the evidence of your reaſon, that theſe things came into being without any cauſe, than you can ſuppoſe, againſt the evidence of your ſenſes, that theſe things

which you ſee have no being. Here then the evidence for the thing not ſeen is equal to the evidence for the thing ſeen. So then a thing's not being ſeen can be no prejudice or preſumption againſt its exiſtence; ſince ſome things which are not ſeen are capable of being demonſtrated.

Hence it follows, that though the things of this world be always before our eyes, and we have no reaſon to doubt of their exiſtence; and the things of the other world are at a diſtance, and hid from us; yet this is no reaſon to prefer the things of this world before the things of another; ſince there is an evidence which extends to things not ſeen, which is equal to the evidence of ſenſe: and, for aught we know, this evidence may belong to theſe unſeen things of another world; and if it does, then the things of another world, in point of certainty, ſtand upon an equal bottom with the things which are ſeen.

This makes it very unreaſonable to take up with the enjoyments of this world as the ſurer and more certain enjoyments, and to ſuffer ourſelves to be impoſed on by our ſenſes, and prejudiced in favour of preſent objects: becauſe, till we have proved and examined the evidences for the things not ſeen, we cannot conclude that the things ſeen are more certain than they; ſince they are capable of being made as evident by other arguments, as ſenſible objects are by the ſenſes.

Another evidence for things not ſeen is faith; an evidence that the world in temporal affairs pays great reſpect to, however ſhy they are of admitting it for a principle of religion: for there is no man

but who believes a great deal more concerning this world, and the affairs of it, upon the report made from other people's ſenſes, than he does from his own. It is a narrow ſphere that a man acts in, and his ſenſes go but a very little farther than he himſelf goes: and a man's knowledge would be extremely confined, were he to know and believe nothing but what he ſaw and heard himſelf. Now there are things in this world which all people believe to be in the world, and yet not one in ten thouſand ever ſaw them. What evidence do they believe on then? Not on the evidence of ſenſe; for theſe things never fell under their ſenſes: but they believe on the report and credit of others, that is, upon the evidence of faith.

Here then is another evidence, which the world cannot refuſe to admit as good evidence for things not ſeen; ſince men believe upon this evidence the certainty of all thoſe things in the world which themſelves have not ſeen, that is, of moſt things in the world.

Now this evidence, where it is perfect, that is, where there is a ſufficient number of credible witneſſes to the thing in queſtion, falls very little ſhort of the evidence of ſenſe. You can obſerve, I believe, no difference that men make between many things which they take upon the credit of others, and the things which they receive from the information of their own ſenſes; which ſhews that this kind of evidence may be ſo ſtrong, as to leave no room for doubts or ſuſpicions.

Now then urge your objection againſt the things of another world, that they are not ſeen, and there-

fore not to be preferred to the things of this world, which are ſeen: where lies the reaſon and ſenſe of this argument? If the things of this world are ſeen, they have their proper evidence: if the things of the next world are not ſeen, they do not therefore want their proper evidence. If there be a ſufficient evidence that is proper to them, and they have that evidence, they are not the worſe for not being ſeen, that is, for not having that evidence which does not belong to them.

If then the things of another world, though they are ſuch as eye hath not ſeen, are yet nevertheleſs capable of as good proof and evidence as the things which are ſeen, it is extreme folly, and want of thought and conſideration, to purſue the objects of ſenſe in oppoſition to things unſeen, without well examining into the evidence and certainty of theſe unſeen things. When we tell you, that for the glories and bleſſings of another life we have the certainty of reaſon and faith, you muſt needs own that we urge proper arguments: the nature of our proof you cannot ſuſpect. If we have enough of reaſon, and enough of the evidence of faith, you muſt acknowledge our proof to be demonſtrative, becauſe it is a proof which in all other caſes you admit for things not ſeen, reaſon and faith.

The things of another world may be objects of ſenſe to thoſe of the other world, and therefore are capable of having the evidence of eyewitneſſes: nor ſhould I eaſily be convinced of abſurdity, ſhould I aſſert that there may poſſibly be a communication between the two worlds. Suppoſe then one ſhould come down from heaven, and report the

ſtate of things there; this would be an eyewitneſs, and the evidence exactly the ſame with that which you admit in other caſes. He muſt give good proof indeed of his coming from heaven; and that in this caſe is ſuppoſed.

Conſider farther, that this queſtion concerning the future rewards and puniſhments of another life is not the firſt or principal queſtion in religion: it ſuppoſes the belief and knowledge of God: for unleſs we believe the being of a God, who is the juſt judge of the world, there is no room for this queſtion of rewards and puniſhments. In this argument then the being of a God is preſuppoſed; and a queſtion then will ariſe, whether God can qualify men to be witneſſes to the world of theſe unſeen things? It is not to be denied but that God can, if he pleaſes, reveal theſe things to men: and were the world ſatisfied that God had indeed revealed ſuch things to ſuch and ſuch men, they could not ſcruple admitting them as good witneſſes in that caſe. It comes then to this point, whether it be poſſible that men can give ſatisfaction to the world, that God has indeed ſpoken to them? And if there be any one thing that you will agree God can do, and man cannot do, this will be no diſpute: for ſhould God do that thing by the man he appoints to be his witneſs, the hand of God working with him would be a full proof that he ſpoke by the voice of God, and declared not his own, but the things of God. And this would be a ſufficient ground for our faith.

Since then theſe things are capable of ſuch good evidence, it will be worth your while to inquire,

whether they have it, or no: and I ſuppoſe it will not be thought the effect of reaſon or wiſdom to reject them unheard, and to follow the impreſſions of ſenſe and appetite at the hazard of being finally ruined and deſtroyed.

Every man who has eyes and ears is attached by the evidence of ſenſe; and therefore it would be ſtrange if any man doubted of the things, the evidence of which is ſo continually thruſt in at his eyes and ears. But to arrive at the evidence of reaſon and faith, requires that we ſhould exerciſe the faculties of our underſtanding; requires our diligence and attention; becauſe theſe proofs lie more remote, out of the common road, and are not to be had without ſeeking for.

This is a juſt account of the reaſon why moſt men act by the evidence of ſenſe, and follow and admire the things of this world; and ſo few purſue, with any heart or zeal, the inviſible things of another: not that the things of this world are in themſelves more real or certain than the things of another world; but becauſe men are ſure and certain of the things of this world, not being able to exclude the impreſſions of them; and are dubious of the things of futurity, not being able to attend to the proofs of them.

But how well this becomes men of thought and education let any one judge; or what account they will be able to give of their neglect, in not ſo much as proving and trying the things which make for their ſalvation, is hard to ſay. Why ſhould your eyes run away with your reaſon and underſtanding? If you had been to be directed merely by your eyes,

God need not have given you the power of reflection: and ſince he has given you this ability, he will not excuſe your reſigning tamely to ſenſe; which was given not to govern, but to ſerve man. If the things of another world are capable of being proved, it concerns you to know whether they are proved or no; eſpecially conſidering the vaſt diſproportion there is between the things of this life and the next. The argument for preſent enjoyment is ſo far good, that in things of equal value a wiſe man would ſecure his ſhare as ſoon as he could, and take the firſt opportunity of enjoying the happineſs which would not improve by being ſtayed for. But here the caſe is very different: the things of this world are *ſeen* indeed; but that is all: no ſooner are they ſeen but they are gone, and leave the man more reſtleſs after the fruition than he was before: but the things of futurity are of endleſs duration, and once enjoyed will never deſert the poſſeſſor. And therefore it is worth a wiſe man's labour to reſtrain himſelf from the preſent allurement of life, to ſuſpend his happineſs for a time, which will ſo greatly increaſe by the delay, and pay ſuch intereſt for the preſent ſelf-denial which he exerciſes: *For the things which are ſeen are temporal; but the things which are not ſeen are eternal.*

DISCOURSE LX.

PART II.

THE ſecond thing to be inquired into is, Whether the value of *the things which are not ſeen* be ſo great, that we ought in prudence to forego the enjoyment of *the things which are preſent with us.*

There can be no ground or foundation to perſuade men to renounce the pleaſures of this life, and to expoſe themſelves to the troubles and inconveniencies which often are the companions of virtue and holineſs, in hopes of future glory and happineſs, unleſs this future glory and happineſs are ſo great and valuable as to recompenſe all the loſſes and ſufferings which men muſt ſuſtain in the purſuit of them. But, if this be the caſe, if the rewards of Heaven are infinitely to be preferred to the things of this world, it will then be but agreeable to the common maxims of wiſdom and prudence to chooſe the greateſt, though not the preſent good, and to prefer the ſevere duties of virtue and religion to the ſoft allurements of vice and pleaſure; ſince our light afflictions in this life can be but for a moment, and will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And it is upon this prin-

ciple that the Apoſtle argues in the text; *For the things which are ſeen are temporal; but the things which are not ſeen are eternal:* by this he juſtifies his own practice and behaviour: he ſuffered perſecution gladly for the ſake of Chriſt and his truth: he ſtript himſelf of all the comforts of this life, and yielded himſelf up to all the hardſhips and evils that man can ſuffer: but it was upon the proſpect of future glory. He was not ſo dead to the ſenſe of nature, as to think the good things of this world worth nothing; or ſo void of feeling, as to delight in ill uſage: but he knew the value of the rewards for which he laboured; that they were ſo great, as to juſtify the choice he made, of ſuffering for Chriſt's ſake, rather than of enjoying the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon.

The Apoſtle's argument is founded upon the different duration of the things of this world and the other. Now it muſt be agreed that we have the ſame evidence for the uncertain, and, at beſt, the ſhort duration of the things of this life, as we have for the exiſtence of them; that is, the evidence of ſenſe. If the voluptuous man has this advantage, that in following after the things of this life he follows things which he ſees, and by the evidence of every ſenſe knows to be real, it muſt be acknowledged that religion at leaſt has this advantage, that, by the ſame evidence of ſenſe, it proves theſe things to be ſcarce worth following after or enjoying, ſince they ſo ſoon vaniſh away, and withdraw from being either the objects of ſenſe or of pleaſure: ſo that, as to this part of the argument, the allowances muſt be equal on both ſides. The men of this world have

the certain evidence of ſenſe for the reality of the things of this world, and that they do exiſt; but they muſt grant, on their part, that we have the ſame certain evidence of ſenſe, that theſe things will not long exiſt; but that both they and their enjoyments muſt ſhortly periſh together.

Since this then is a clear caſe on both ſides, and the principles are undiſputed, let us take this part of the argument alone, and examine what are the concluſions of reaſon from this head, that *the things which are ſeen are temporal.*

To eſtimate the happineſs of man, we muſt take into the account the nature of his deſires and inclinations, and the nature of thoſe objects which he purſues. If there be ſuch a due proportion between theſe two, that the object is capable of ſatisfying the deſire, then the object obtained is capable of making a man happy. To be reſtleſs and uneaſy, and ſtill wanting ſomething that we have not, will not, I ſuppoſe, be thought a good deſcription of an happy life: and yet this muſt always be the caſe when our deſires are fixed upon ſuch objects as do not anſwer and correſpond to them, but fall ſhort of affording ſuch a pleaſure as may fill and content the mind. Now there are different paſſions and deſires incident to man: theſe are not the ſame in all men, but vary according to the various tempers and habits of men, and depend upon the circumſtances of youth and age, and the like: but theſe paſſions being ſo uncertain and mutable, cannot enter into this inquiry, which is after the natural happineſs of man, which muſt be eſtimated by his natural and conſtant deſires, and not by the ſudden efforts of paſſion

which he is liable to. Now the moſt natural and conſtant deſire of man is the deſire of life: there is nothing nature equally abhors with the thoughts of not being: but then the life of this world is but ſhort, and muſt end in death; and therefore the life of this world cannot be the adequate object of this deſire; and conſequently the life of this world can never make a man happy, becauſe it does not anſwer to the natural deſire, but leaves a man reſtleſs and uneaſy, and in perpetual dread of his approaching diſſolution.

Another natural and conſtant deſire, which is grafted upon the former, and ſprings from it, is the deſire of being happy, of being always happy, without ſuffering any interruption from ſorrow or pain, or afflictions of any kind: hence it comes, that the fear of loſing the thing we poſſeſs and enjoy is often a trouble equal to the pleaſure of the poſſeſſion; which ſhews that no poſſeſſion that is not durable can fill and ſatisfy the mind of man: which evidently proves that the natural deſire is the deſire of perpetual uninterrupted happineſs; and if ſo, then nothing leſs than perpetual happineſs can be the natural object of that deſire, or make a man eaſy and happy. Now, whether the world affords ſuch an happineſs as this, can be no queſtion, ſince we have the evidence of ſenſe and reaſon and experience to the contrary.

From hence it appears, that to place our happineſs in this life, and the things of it, is at beſt to place our happineſs where it can never be had. We can never poſſibly free ourſelves from the natural deſires of life and happineſs. The Atheiſt, who

would ridicule the belief of another world, and a durable life after this, can never bring himſelf to ſay that it is better to die than to live for ever, and for ever happily: ſo that, at once retaining the deſires of eternal life, and denying the poſſibility of ſuch a life, he reduces himſelf to ſuch a ſtate as can afford no happineſs; for to have deſires which can never end in enjoyment for want of ſuitable objects, is to have deſires only to make us miſerable.

If then this world has nothing that can make us happy, nothing that can anſwer our natural deſires and appetites, ſurely it cannot be the effect of wiſdom or prudence to confine our inquiries after happineſs to this world, where it is not to be had: ſo that the firſt concluſion of reaſon from this allowed principle, that *the things which are ſeen are temporal*, is this; that the things of this world being temporal, and our deſires adapted to the fruition of things eternal, this world can never make us happy; the conſequence of which is, that we muſt ſeek out for another abiding place, if haply we may find it, where we may meet with objects ſuited to our deſires; the only means by which we can ever arrive at complete and perfect happineſs. So that the voice of nature ſpeaks the ſame language with our bleſſed Saviour, and calls out to us in his words, *Set not your affections on things below, where moth and ruſt doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and ſteal: but ſet your affections on things above, where neither moth nor ruſt doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and ſteal:* that is, place not your deſires on this world, which has nothing that can ſatisfy them; but place your deſires above,

where God has prepared an happineſs anſwerable to the impreſſions he has given to the ſouls of men.

That the things which are ſeen are temporal, is indeed no ſufficient proof that there are things which are not ſeen which are eternal; though it is a great preſumption, that, ſince God has not fitted this world to our deſires, he has fitted our deſires to another world; and has not given us theſe cravings of nature merely to vex and torment us, without any poſſibility of their being ſatisfied: but thus far we prove, from the things of this world being temporal, that they cannot make us happy. And this makes religion to be a very ſerious concern, ſince all our hopes of happineſs depend on it: for if religion cannot furniſh objects adapted to our natural deſires, nothing elſe can: and therefore men ſhould think ſoberly and maturely before they reject religion, and diveſt themſelves of all the hopes they have, or can have, of being happy. Who would not be glad to live for ever, and to be for ever happy! Is it not then very unnatural to ſee a man rejoice and triumph in the thoughts that there is neither a life nor happineſs which is eternal? It is, indeed, better not to be, than to be miſerable: and therefore the thoughts of dropping into everlaſting ſilence and darkneſs may be the refuge of guilty fear, but never can be a natural joy or comfort to the ſoul of man, which longs for nothing ſo much as life for evermore. The only reaſon any man can poſſibly have to wiſh that there may be no other world, is, that he may with the more freedom enjoy this: and this muſt needs appear to be a wiſe reaſon, if we conſider the value of this world, and the worth

of theſe things, which are no ſooner ſeen but they are gone, and their place is no more found. I ſhould not wonder, were this world to laſt for ever, to ſee men of low and abject ſpirits ſetting up their reſt, and giving up the hopes of more exalted glory and happineſs: but now that the world muſt laſt but a little time, and we much leſs, to ſee men ſacrifice their hopes of glory and immortality to the mean and poor enjoyments of this world, is ſuch an abſurdity as would puzzle any one to account for, who knew nothing more of man, than that he is a reaſonable creature. It is ſo little men gain by gaining this world, and ſo little they loſe by loſing it, that the concerns of this world would weigh but light in this queſtion, were not men guided more by the violence of paſſion, than either by reaſon or the regular deſires of nature.

For ſuppoſe, ſecondly, that religion were very uncertain, and a man were liable to be deceived in his expectations of future rewards; let us examine again by this rule, that *the things which are ſeen are temporal*, what the conſequence of this miſtake would be, and how much a man would be a ſufferer by it. As to the ordinary courſe of the world, in which a man may profeſs his religion without diſturbance or perſecution, the pleaſures which are conſiſtent with innocence and virtue will be found to have more of real ſatisfaction than the vicious man can ever find from the gratification of his ſenſual deſires and appetites. But we will wave this topic, becauſe the text goes upon the ſuppoſition, that we muſt give up this world, and ſubmit to many hardſhips and inconveniencies in it, in order to obtain the other;

and at all times there is difficulty enough in ſubmitting to the reſtraints of religion; till men have got to be maſters of their own paſſions and appetites, and have learnt to uſe the world, as not abuſing it.

Say then, that a man loſes the pleaſures of this world, in following after the pleaſures of another: his loſs muſt be valued according to the worth of the thing which is loſt. Now things of this world being very uncertain poſſeſſions, which are often hardly obtained, and ſeldom long preſerved, the loſs of theſe things cannot be ſet very high. It is evident that the men of the world do not always ſucceed in their deſires: they are liable to a thouſand diſappointments, which cut them ſhort in their proſpects, and render all their pains and labour abortive. Of the many who ſeek the honours and glory of this life, but a very ſmall number attain to the end of their deſires. Since then to follow the world and the good things of it is no ſure way of obtaining the world, it may happen that he that purſues the glories of another world, to the neglect of this, may loſe juſt nothing at all; for, poſſibly, had he given himſelf up to this world, he might have got no ſhare in it: for ſuch is the mutable condition of theſe things, and ſo many the chances they are liable to, that a man can have no ſecurity from all his pains and toil of enjoying the thing he purſues: and if by following the world he might poſſibly have got nothing, then poſſibly by not following the world he may loſe nothing; for a man cannot be ſaid to loſe more than he might have got. And therefore in this queſtion it is a great miſtake to

reckon up all the good things of this world together, and then to ſay, theſe things do we loſe by religion; for if we had no religion, we ſhould never be able to get the hundredth part of theſe fine things; and we cannot be ſaid to relinquiſh more of the world than we might have got had we not relinquiſhed it.

And now you may learn from the nature of worldly poſſeſſions, and your own experience, what ſort of chance a man has of being ſatisfied with the enjoyments of life, ſuppoſing him to take the utmoſt pains for them: poſſibly he may never get them; for there are ſo many pretenders, that they are ever joſtling one another out; and, poſſibly too, if he does get them, they may leave him before he has half done with them; or, it may be, when he has got them, he may not like or reliſh them; for many things which look well at a diſtance, and raiſe and inflame the deſires, loſe their value by being poſſeſſed, and appear to be, what in truth they are, empty and vain allurements. Now this chance for worldly happineſs is all that a man quits for religion; for you cannot ſay that he quitted the good things of life, without knowing whether he ever could have had them, or no. It is ten to one againſt you, that if you follow the world you get nothing, or but little, by it; and therefore there are the ſame odds on the other ſide, that if you follow religion you loſe little or nothing by it. So that ſuppoſing religion to be uncertain, yet a man does not venture much for it, or put himſelf into a much worſe condition than he was in before, by reaſon of the uncertain condition of the world.

And, on the other ſide, this may be ſaid, that if religion reaches no farther than this life; yet one good effect of it here is evidently this, that it makes men eaſy and contented under the diſappointments of this life: ſo that whatever the loſs of the world may be to a worldly man, yet to a truly religious man it is inconſiderable, becauſe he is not equally affected with ſuch loſſes, being ſtrengthened and confirmed againſt them by the hopes he has entertained of more laſting and ſolid enjoyments. So that add this to the account, and it will appear, that religion in this world is the ſureſt ſtep you can take, if not towards happineſs, yet towards eaſe and contentment: for, ſince ſo many who follow the world muſt neceſſarily be diſappointed by following the world, we expoſe ourſelves to all the uneaſineſs and pain of loſing it; and, as things go, it is well if the pain and uneaſineſs of loſing the world be not all we get by purſuing it. But religion is the art of governing and ruling the paſſions, of making ourſelves eaſy without being gratified with the pleaſures of this life; and when we are thus prepared, not to enjoy the pleaſures is no great miſchief. So that if there be no other world but this, yet by religion we are ſure of getting the ſecond beſt thing that can be had in the world, that is, contentment. Admit that the firſt thing is to have and enjoy the things we want; yet certainly the next beſt thing is to be eaſy without them. The firſt the world but rarely grants; the next religion never denies. And thus far we may argue from the nature of worldly things, without entering into the compariſon between them and the things of another life; which extremely al-

ters the ſtate of the queſtion, and makes it reaſonable not only to forego the pleaſures, but even to chooſe and embrace the ſorrows of life for the ſake of future glory: *For the things which are not ſeen are eternal.*

As to the nature of the happineſs of another life, we know but little of it: the deſcriptions we meet with in Scripture are figurative, and lead not to the true knowledge of the glories they deſcribe. Poſſibly this world affords no notions or ideas proper to expreſs the happineſs of heaven; which can therefore only be deſcribed in figures taken from the preſent ſenſe we have of pleaſure and enjoyment: hence the happineſs of heaven is ſometimes painted under the figure of a marriage feaſt, which is a time uſually ſtolen from ſorrow, and dedicated to mirth and good humour. Sometimes the deſcription is grounded upon our notions of power and dignity, which are great darlings to mankind: hence we read of crowns of glory, which cannot be ſhaken, which fade not away, which are reſerved for us in the higheſt heavens. From hence we only argue that the happineſs is very great, and exceeding much the glories of this world, which are but faint images, and ſcarcely ſerve to repreſent the glories of heaven: but we have a clear notion of duration; and therefore to this point the Scripture ſpeaks plain, and tells us that theſe are pleaſures for evermore; that they are eternal, and eternally the ſame without changing. Nothing likewiſe is more uſual than to expreſs the happineſs of heaven by life, by everlaſting life; *Whoſoever*, ſays our Saviour, *believeth in me ſhall live, though he die; and whoſoever believeth in me ſhall not die eter-*

nally. This then is the natural happineſs of man, ſince it alone can anſwer the natural deſires of man; for nothing leſs than eternal life can ſatisfy that deſire of life which is implanted in man: and nothing can be more evident to ſenſe than this is to reaſon, that ſomething has been from all eternity, and ſomething ſhall be to all eternity: ſo that our deſires of eternity are not looſe ill-grounded deſires; but there are evidently objects in nature fitted to them. Since then we cannot poſſibly live without deſiring to live for ever, and to enjoy eternal happineſs; ſince likewiſe it is clear to a demonſtration that there are things eternal; is it not agreeable to the very inſtinct of nature to endeavour after theſe things, which can only make for our happineſs, if by any means we may attain to them? To lead us to the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of theſe things is the work and buſineſs of religion: and therefore to be employed in the work of religion is to be employed in the work of nature, which is to ſeek and purſue its own happineſs and perfection.

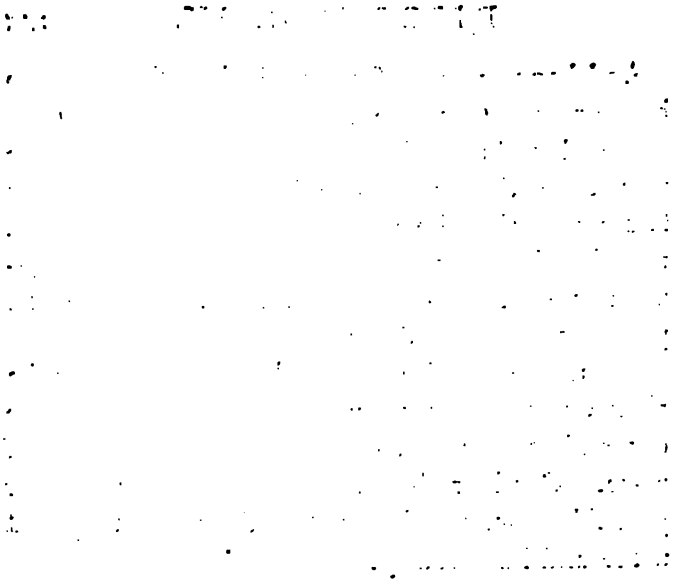
If religion is attended with difficulties, yet the glories we attain to through the means of religion are worth the purchaſe. What is there that can be had without pains and trouble? Not even the preſent enjoyment of this life. Why then ſhould we think much of being at ſome trouble to purchaſe the eternal things of heaven? We do not grudge it in leſs matters, in the matter of our earthly hopes and deſires. We loſe nothing by religion that we could poſſibly keep long without it: a good man can ſuffer only in this world; and were he not to ſuffer, yet the courſe of nature would ſoon part him

and the world, and the enjoyments of it. And is it not worth our while to reſign the things we cannot keep a little the ſooner, for the ſake of that happineſs, which once poſſeſſed can never be taken from us, but, like our deſires, will be ever freſh and new, not impaired by uſe, or palled by enjoyment?

It is wiſe to retire from the pleaſures of the world, were it only to guard againſt this certain evil conſequence, that if we follow the preſent things, to the neglect and contempt of future happineſs, the time will certainly come when our preſent enjoyments will be paſt and gone, when things future will be growing apace to be the things preſent; and then we ſhall have nothing left but this evil thought to haunt us perpetually, that we have had our good things in this world, and muſt expect evil things in the world to come: that we have for the time paſt been comforted, but muſt for the time to come be tormented. As ſhort-lived as men are, they often outlaſt the world, that is, the enjoyments of it: they live to be paſt the pleaſures of it, and can have no comfort or eaſe by any ſenſe. And is not a wicked man in a fine condition, when he has no enjoyment in this world, and no hopes in the next? Men, in the youth and vigour of age, may overcome the troubleſome thoughts of another world: they are capable of a conſtant ſucceſſion of worldly pleaſures, which may extinguiſh thought and conſideration: but, if they live to be deſerted by ſenſe, to be expoſed to thought and reflection, how diſmal a proſpect have they! how are they tormented with the thoughts of what is paſt and how do they dread the thoughts of what is to come!

And happy were it for them if their fears were to be their only torment: but let their eyes but once be cloſed, and their fears muſt be ſucceeded by more than even their fears could ſuggeſt: the things future will then be the things preſent; and this thought, that they are eternal, will exclude all glimmerings of hope or comfort, and leave them the prey of pain and of deſpair.

Let us then work whilſt we have the day; for the night cometh when no man can work. This is the day, and for aught we know this only is the day of peace. Conſider then the things which make for your ſalvation, and follow after them, for they lead to life and immortality.



DISCOURSE LXI.

General Epiſtle of St. Jude, ver. 3.—the latter part.

—It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye ſhould earneſtly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the ſaints.

IT is at all times the duty of the paſtors and miniſters of the Chriſtian church to call upon the people to be zealous to maintain, and by proper methods to propagate, the faith of the Goſpel: but there are ſeaſons in which it is more eſpecially neceſſary for them to diſcharge this duty; ſeaſons which require that the paſtors ſhould be vigilant to prevent, and the people careful to avoid, the danger of growing errors and ſuperſtitions.

Such was the ſeaſon, and ſuch the occaſion of this Epiſtle. Some very dangerous errors, and ſome abominable practices, began to ſhew themſelves among the members of the church, and there was great reaſon to apprehend the infection would ſpread. *Certain men*, it ſeems, had *crept in unawares —ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into laſciviouſneſs, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* This it was that made it needful for the Apoſtle to exhort Chriſtians every-where to

contend earneſtly for the faith once delivered to the ſaints.

If it was needful in the Apoſtles' times, when the miſchief began firſt to ſhew itſelf, what muſt it be in ours, when this evil ſeems to be at its full growth, and to ſurround us in different ſhapes on every ſide? Superſtition on one hand, and irreligion on the other, have left true Chriſtians a narrow path to walk in: and though reaſon and reflection will make men ſometimes ſick of the extremes, yet the tranſition from one extreme to another is much eaſier, than from either to the truth that lies between them. From popery to no religion, and from no religion to popery, is a ready ſtep: and when a man is tired of either extreme, it requires only a reſolution to run away from it as faſt as he can, to get ſoon to the other; whereas it requires a ſerious and a ſteady mind to ſtop at the right place.

Another difficulty there is, which diſtinguiſhes our times from that of the Apoſtles: St. Jude complains, that ſome corrupt men, teaching perverſe doctrines, had mixed with Chriſtian ſocieties; but it was by ſtealth and unawares they had crept in: the churches themſelves were pure and uncorrupt, and profeſſed and taught the true faith of the Goſpel of Chriſt. But our caſe is far otherwiſe. There are, indeed, in all churches, corrupt members, a calamity common to all times: but in theſe latter days the infection has ſpread ſo far, and ſo wide, that whole churches are tainted with it. The errors we have to contend with are not ſuch as creep in ſilently and unawares, but ſuch as are taught by authority, and inſiſted on as neceſſary conditions of

Chriſtian communion: they are preſſed upon men by an application of all the promiſes of the Goſpel to thoſe who receive them gladly, and of all the threats of the Goſpel to ſuch as embrace them not. Is it not then now, more than ever, needful to exhort men to *contend earneſtly for the faith once delivered to the ſaints?*

But it is to little purpoſe to exhort men to be zealous for the Chriſtian faith, unleſs you can give them ſome ſure and certain mark to know what the right faith is. If you inquire of particular churches, or ſocieties of Chriſtians, which is the true faith, each of them will anſwer, that the faith profeſſed by them is the true one, and that other ſocieties have fallen into errors and miſtakes. In this divided ſtate of things, therefore, no church has a right to be believed on its own word merely, without giving a reaſon of the faith which is in them: and yet this pretence of authority is the only thing that can be ſaid, and therefore it always is ſaid, to juſtify the dominion which the church of Rome has uſurped over the faith of Chriſtians. With how much better grace might St. Jude have dictated to the Chriſtians of his time, and told them, upon his own authority, what the true faith was, in oppoſition to corrupt teachers! But does he ſo? By no means: ſo far from it, that he gives them another rule to examine the faith by, and ſends them to inquire, what the faith was, which was once, or from the beginning, delivered to Chriſtians.

Church authority is one of thoſe unhappy ſubjects which is ſeldom ſeen but from one of its ex-

tremes: in ſome places, and with ſome perſons, it can do every thing; in others, it can do nothing. I cannot propoſe to conſider juſtly ſo copious a ſubject in the compaſs of a ſermon; and therefore I ſhall content myſelf with laying before you ſome obſervations on the apoſtolic rule in the text, which may be of uſe if duly conſidered. And,

Firſt, Since an Apoſtle of Chriſt, in early days of the church, ſent Chriſtians to inquire after the faith delivered from the beginning, it follows manifeſtly that the Apoſtles themſelves were but teachers and witneſſes of the faith, and had no authority or commiſſion to make new articles of faith. Had it been otherwiſe, how abſurd was it in St. Jude to ſend Chriſtians to an inquiry after the faith *once delivered*, when he and they could not but know, that there was a ſtanding authority to make articles of faith, and that no ſuch inquiry was wanting.

The truth of this concluſion may be abundantly proved, by conſidering the commiſſion and authority the Apoſtles received from Chriſt, and their conduct in the execution of them: *Go ye*, ſays our bleſſed Lord, *into all the world, and preach the Goſpel to every creature*, Mark xvi. 15. The Goſpel then was the thing committed to them to be taught to the world, and not to be made or to be altered by them; which ſenſe is delivered in terms more expreſs in St. Matthew, for there the words are, *Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you*, ch. xxviii. 20. The promiſe annexed, *And lo, I am with you to the end of the world*, muſt be relative to their commiſſion, and they could de-

pend on it no longer than whilſt they kept within the limits of their commiſſion, which was to teach what Chriſt had commanded.

When the time of our Saviour's leaving the world drew near, he told his Apoſtles he would not *leave them comfortleſs, but pray the Father to ſend them another Comforter, to abide with them for ever*, John xiv. 16. The office of this Comforter is deſcribed, ver. 26; *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghoſt, whom the Father will ſend in my name, he ſhall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatſoever I have ſaid unto you.* If then the office of the Spirit was to *bring to their remembrance* what Chriſt had ſaid to them, their office, as teachers, could only be to publiſh the doctrine of Chriſt. The Spirit was likewiſe to *teach them all things*, that is, to teach them to underſtand rightly all things, and to preſerve them from miſtaking the meaning of what our Lord ſaid to them, which was frequently their caſe whilſt they converſed with him on earth.

Let us conſider, in the next place, the conduct of the Apoſtles, and how they executed the commiſſion with which they were intruſted.

One of the firſt things they did was to elect an Apoſtle into the place of Judas. When they were to chooſe an Apoſtle, without doubt they conſidered the qualifications neceſſary to the office; and for that reaſon St. Peter declared that the choice was neceſſarily confined to ſuch as had *companied with them all the time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out among them, beginning from the baptiſm of John, unto the ſame day that he was taken up from us*: ſo that no man was capable of being an Apoſtle, who was

not capable of being a witneſs of the doctrines and works of our bleſſed Lord: a plain evidence that their buſineſs was to report the doctrines of Chriſt, and not to deliver doctrines of their own. Accordingly the four Goſpels, publiſhed to inſtruct the world in the Chriſtian faith, are an hiſtory of what our Saviour did, taught, and ſuffered: and St. Luke particularly tells us, that he wrote his Goſpel, *having had perfect underſtanding of all things from the very firſt.* So that St. Luke, in writing his Goſpel, followed the rule preſcribed by St. Jude, and reported the *faith once delivered to the ſaints.*

St. John, in his firſt Epiſtle general, refers likewiſe to the beginning and firſt revelation of the Goſpel to ſhew the authority of the doctrines which he delivered. Hear his own words: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life—that which we have ſeen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye alſo may have fellowſhip with us.* St. John's referring in this manner to what he had heard and ſeen, to eſtabliſh his authority as a preacher of the Goſpel, plainly ſhews that he thought himſelf bound to preach only what he had heard and ſeen, and that he had no authority to preach any other doctrine. It is obſervable that St. John, in the paſſage before us, ſays expreſsly, that he wrote the things he had heard and ſeen from the beginning, that thoſe to whom his Epiſtle came might *have fellowſhip with the Apoſtles:* a plain proof that a right of fellowſhip with the Apoſtles, or, in other words, a right to church com-

munion, depends upon receiving and embracing the *faith once delivered to the ſaints*, and not upon any other doctrines of later date, by what authority ſoever publiſhed or declared.

St. Paul's caſe was a ſingular one: he was not called in our Saviour's life-time, and conſequently had not the qualification required in the firſt of the Acts, when a new Apoſtle was to be choſen: he was not one of thoſe who had *companied with the Apoſtles during the time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out among them:* but if we conſider how this defect was ſupplied in his caſe, it will juſtify the obſervation we are upon in the ſtrongeſt manner imaginable.

As St. Paul converſed not with Chriſt in the fleſh, ſo neither did he receive the Goſpel from any of the Apoſtles, who did; but had it by immediate revelation from Chriſt himſelf: ſo that his preaching had this apoſtolical character, that he taught the things which he had ſeen and heard of Chriſt. When he was miraculouſly called to be an Apoſtle, to qualify him for the office Chriſt promiſed to be his inſtructor: *I have appeared unto thee*, ſays our Lord, *for this purpoſe, to make thee a miniſter and a witneſs both of theſe things which thou haſt ſeen, and of thoſe things in the which I will appear unto thee*, Acts xxvi. 16. Accordingly St. Paul, ſpeaking to the Galatians of his own authority as an Apoſtle, tells them that he was *an Apoſtle not of men, neither by man, but by Jeſus Chriſt, and God the Father, who raiſed him from the dead*, Gal. i. 1. And again, in the 11th and 12th verſes, *I certify you, brethren, that the Goſpel which was preached of me is not after man*;

for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt.

This revelation to St. Paul extended not merely to points of doctrine, but conveyed to him likewiſe the knowledge of hiſtorical facts: as is plain from 1 Cor. xi. 23. where ſpeaking of the inſtitution of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, he ſays, *I have received of the Lord that which alſo I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jeſus, the ſame night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it*; and ſo goes on to give an hiſtorical account of what was ſaid and done at the laſt ſupper; agreeing with the account given by thoſe Apoſtles who were preſent at the tranſaction.

From theſe things laid together it is evident, that the Apoſtles were witneſſes and teachers of the faith, and had no authority to add any thing to the doctrine of Chriſt, or to declare new articles of faith.

Now if the Apoſtles, commiſſioned directly by Chriſt himſelf, and ſupported by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, had not this power, can any of their ſucceſſors in the government of the church, without great impiety, pretend to it? Did the Biſhops and Clergy of the ninth and tenth centuries know the articles of the faith better than the Apoſtles did? or were they more powerfully aſſiſted by the Holy Spirit? No Chriſtian can think it, or ſay it. Whence is it then that the church of Rome has received the power they pretend to, of making new articles of faith, and dooming all to eternal deſtruction who receive them not? Can any ſober ſerious Chriſtian truſt himſelf to ſuch guides, and not tremble when he reads the woe denounced by

St. Paul; *Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Goſpel—let him be accurſed?*

When the corruptions of the church of Rome were generally felt and complained of, and no applications whatever could prevail to obtain any alteration; the fear of owning an error, and thereby weakening the authority claimed, being more powerful to continue the old errors, than the force of truth, or even of conviction, was to reform them; what had ſerious Chriſtians left to do, but to ſeek after, if happily they could find, *the faith once delivered to the ſaints*; to ſeparate between the old doctrines of the Goſpel, and the new inventions of men; and to build up a church *upon the foundation of the Apoſtles, Chriſt Jeſus himſelf being the head corner-ſtone?*

What has hitherto been ſaid relates merely to the doctrines of the Goſpel; to points of Chriſtian faith: in theſe, neither the Apoſtles of Chriſt, nor the church after them, had any authority, but to preach and publiſh to the world what they had received. If we extend this farther, and ſay that the Apoſtles, and church after them, had no more authority in any thing elſe than they had in articles of the faith, we run into an extreme, that can produce nothing but diſorder and confuſion; which muſt be the deſtruction of all Chriſtian ſocieties, and end in making every man a church by himſelf.

It may be worth our while to conſider the grounds of this diſtinction, as they are to be found in holy Scripture.

In the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew, in the fifteenth and following verſes, we have this direction

from our Saviour: *If thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witneſſes every word may be eſtabliſhed. But if he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican.*

In caſes which fall under this direction (and ſome there are without doubt, or there would have been no direction about them) the church has a judicial authority, and a right to inflict the puniſhment mentioned. This power may be, and often has been, moſt flagrantly abuſed: but to ſay the church has no authority in caſes which come under this direction, is to deny not only the authority of the church, but the authority of Chriſt likewiſe, who gave the direction.

This authority of the church is taken notice of by St. Paul; and he rebukes the church of Corinth for not making uſe of it, to ſeparate from them the inceſtuous perſon, who had given offence not to one, but to all Chriſtians.

But there is another power which the Apoſtles had and exerciſed, and which they committed to thoſe who ſucceeded them; I mean the authority of ſettling churches, and preſcribing rules of order and decency to them.

If we conſider St. Paul's conduct in the diſputes which happened in the church of Corinth, we ſhall ſee how carefully he diſtinguiſhes between his duty to preach the Goſpel of Chriſt juſt as he had re-

ceived it, and his authority in matters of order and decency. The Corinthians had been guilty of great miſbehaviour in eating the Lord's ſupper, as if they had forgot the end and the uſe of it. St. Paul, to ſet them right, gives them an account of this inſtitution; and here he expreſsly ſays, that he delivered to them *what he had received of the Lord:* but in directing ſome circumſtances of their behaviour at this ſupper, he ſpeaks in his own name: *When ye come together to eat,* ſays he, *tarry for one another; and if any man hunger, let him eat at home:* and concludes, with reſerving to himſelf the giving farther directions at a proper time: *The reſt,* ſays he, *will I ſet in order when I come.*

As he exerciſed this authority himſelf, ſo he committed the like authority to thoſe who ſucceeded him in the paſtoral care. The Epiſtles to Timothy and Titus are full of rules or canons for the government of the reſpective churches under their care; which were to be ſupplied, as occaſion required, by orders of their own: *For this cauſe,* ſays St. Paul to Titus, *I left thee in Crete, that thou ſhouldeſt ſet in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city.*

Which particulars laid together manifeſtly ſhew, that there was a power or authority in particular churches to ſettle matters of diſcipline, order, and decency for themſelves; and that there were no rules of this kind of univerſal obligation to all churches.

As the Apoſtles, conſidered ſingly as commiſſioned and inſpired teachers, had no authority over the

faith, neither had they when met together in council: for the doctrine and Goſpel of Chriſt could no more be altered by his twelve Apoſtles, than it could be by one of them. We have but one inſtance of an apoſtolic council, which was held at Jeruſalem; and proceedings of it are recorded in the fifteenth of the Acts of the Apoſtles.

The matter here controverted, and ſettled by decree of the council, was plainly a matter of government and diſcipline, and not of the ſubſtance of faith; and it was determined by prudential conſiderations, ariſing from the circumſtances of the Chriſtian Church at that time. The caſe was this: St. Paul had converted many among the Gentiles, and ſettled ſeveral churches in Aſia. The Jewiſh Chriſtians inſiſted that the Gentile converts ſhould be circumciſed, and obſerve the law of Moſes. Paul and Barnabas, Apoſtles of the Gentiles, withſtood this demand of the Jews, and had, as the words of the text are, *no ſmall diſſenſion and diſputation with them.* They agreed to refer the queſtion to the Apoſtles and Elders at Jeruſalem; and thither they went. The council being aſſembled, the caſe was opened *with much diſputing* on both ſides: then St. Peter roſe up, and declared his opinion, and the reaſons of it: he reminds them, that he himſelf was the perſon choſen by God to be the firſt preacher of the Goſpel to the Gentiles, and that God had given a token of his accepting the Gentiles, by giving them the Holy Ghoſt, even as he had given it to the Jewiſh Chriſtians, and *put*, as his own words are, *no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith;*

and then concludes againſt laying the burden or yoke of the law of Moſes upon the Gentile converts.

St. Peter's argument is drawn from the caſe of Cornelius, to whom he was ſent, by expreſs revelation, to preach the Goſpel. Cornelius was a Gentile, no obſerver of the law of Moſes; nor was St. Peter, when ſent to preach to him, inſtructed to require of him obedience to the law of Moſes: and yet in this ſtate God accepted Cornelius and his houſehold, and the gift of the Holy Ghoſt was poured on them. And St. Peter's concluſion is, that ſince God accepted Cornelius and his family, without calling them to the obſervance of the Moſaic law, the obſervance of the Moſaic law was not a condition to be impoſed on the Gentile converts.

After St. Peter, Barnabas and Paul gave an account what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them: which was ſtrengthening St. Peter's argument, by ſhewing that what had happened in the caſe of Cornelius had alſo happened in many inſtances during their miniſtry among the Gentiles.

St. James, Biſhop of Jeruſalem, ſpeaks next: he approves the reaſoning of St. Peter, and ſhews, from the ancient prophecies, that the call of the Gentiles into the church of Chriſt was, from the beginning, the deſign of Providence: *Wherefore,* ſays he, *my opinion is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.*

It is manifeſt that this reaſoning extends to every part of the ceremonial law, and that the Gentiles were bound no more by one point of that law than by another: and yet we ſhall find that in the concluſion

of the council ſome points of the law of Moſes were required to be obſerved in the Gentile churches.

It is one thing to be bound to obſerve the law of Moſes, as matter of neceſſary duty; it is another thing to comply with ſome parts of that law, upon motives of Chriſtian charity and prudence. It was lawful for the Gentile converts to live without obſerving any part of the law of Moſes; but though *all things are lawful, yet*, as St. Paul ſays, *all things are not expedient—all things edify not:* and again, *meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worſe*, 1 Cor. viii. 8.

This being the reaſon of the caſe, the circumſtances of the Chriſtian church of that time weighed with this apoſtolical council to require of the Gentile converts a compliance with ſome particulars of the Moſaic law. St. James, who opens this advice, gives the reaſon of it: he conſidered that in all the cities where Gentile churches had been planted, there were Jewiſh converts likewiſe, who were zealous of the law, and would hold no communication with the Gentiles who eat blood, things ſtrangled, and the like; and therefore, unleſs the Gentile Chriſtians complied in ſuch particulars, there muſt be an irreconcileable diviſion in the church of Chriſt, to the loſs of that charity, on which the Goſpel ſets ſo great a price.

St. James therefore, after declaring his opinion that the Gentile converts were not bound by the law of Moſes, propoſes however to write to them to *abſtain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things ſtrangled, and from blood:* the reaſon he

ives in theſe words; *For Moſes of old time hath in very city*, i. e. in the cities where Gentile churches ere planted, *them that preach him, being read in the nagogues every ſabbath.* From whence it is evient, that the injunctions of the council to the entile converts were founded upon prudential conderations with reſpect to the Jews; and the matrs ordained by the council were matters of diſciline and government only. The paſſage underood in this ſenſe contains a very ſtrong argument o juſtify the decree of the council; for the Jews aving been born and bred under the law of Moſes, ould not eaſily be perſuaded to depart from it; and herefore, unleſs the Gentile Chriſtians could be rought to avoid giving them any offence, there ould be no hope of peace in the Chriſtian church.

The reaſon upon which the decree of the council s founded accounts for the conduct of St. Paul in ike caſes. When he circumciſed Timothy, it was ecauſe of the Jews which were in thoſe quarters: nd when he came to Jeruſalem, St. James prevailed vith him to purify himſelf according to the uſage of he Jews. The argument made uſe of by St. James vas the very ſame with that uſed by the council; *Thou ſeeſt, brother, how many thouſands of Jews there re which believe, and they are all zealous of the law; lo therefore this which we ſay to thee, that all may now that thou walkeſt orderly and keepeſt the law.* This was going a greater length than the council had one with reſpect to the Gentiles, *as touching whom*, t. James ſays, *we have written and concluded that hey obſerve no ſuch thing, ſave only that they keep*

themſelves from meat offered to idols, and from blood, and from things ſtrangled, and from fornication.

There is a queſtion that ariſes from this caſe, to know why the particulars mentioned are ſingled out, when the Jews were ſtrongly attached to other points of the law.

But, if you conſider the caſe, the reaſon for this diſtinction will evidently appear: for, as the concern was to prevent the giving offence to the Jews, and thereby to preſerve peace and charity in the church of Chriſt, it was neceſſary to guard againſt the practices which open to every body's view in the common occurrences of life. A Jew could never be preſent at the table of a Chriſtian without having ſome ſecurity that he ſhould not meet with things offered to idols, nor with blood, nor things ſtrangled; otherwiſe all intercourſe between them would be cut off: and though St. James, upon the principle of the council, perſuaded St. Paul to purify himſelf, yet that had relation to St. Paul's particular circumſtances; and the ſame advice would not have been given to any other Chriſtian who was a Gentile believer; for it was not the intention of the council to recommend the rites and ceremonies of the law to the Gentile Chriſtians.

But the great difficulty in this caſe is to know what is meant by fornication, which ſeems to be an offence of a moral kind, and in which the Jews had no particular concern: how therefore it fell under the direction of the council is hard to ſay.

It is certain, that if we underſtood fornication in the common ſenſe of the word, and as it is vulgarly

uſed with us, it can have no meaning in this place, it expreſſing a thing that had no relation to the matter under conſideration of the council.

In reſpect to things offered to idols, and blood, the Jews were not only forbidden the uſe of them, but were forbidden likewiſe all communication with thoſe that did uſe them, though they were ſtrangers, and not bound by the law of Moſes: *I ſaid unto the children of Iſrael, No ſoul of you ſhall eat blood, neither ſhall any ſtranger that ſojourneth among you eat blood,* Lev. xvii. 12. It is no wonder therefore that the Jews, who were zealous for the law, thought all communication forbidden with thoſe who allowed themſelves the eating of blood.

They had the ſame ground for treating in like manner thoſe who partook of meats offered to idols, which I need not ſpend your time in proving.

The word πορνεία, which we tranſlate *fornication*, has a great latitude, and includes in it all carnal impurity: and whoever conſiders the abominable lewdneſs which made part of the worſhip paid to the heathen idols, will not think it ſtrange to find the worſhip of idols and whoredom joined together in the decree of the council. Nor is this peculiar to the council; for if you look into the writings of the New Teſtament, you will ſee them joined together in like manner. Thus in the firſt of the Corinthians: *Be not deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters—ſhall inherit the kingdom of God,* chap. vi. ver. 9. And in the Revelations of St. John: *But I have a few things againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to caſt a ſtumblingblock before the*

children of Iſrael, to eat things ſacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication, ch. ii. ver. 14. And thus, verſe 20. *Notwithſtanding, I have a few things againſt thee, becauſe thou ſuffereſt that woman Jezebel, which calleth herſelf a propheteſs, to teach and to ſeduce my ſervants to commit fornication, and to eat things ſacrificed unto idols.* Agreeable to this notion idolatry is ſtyled whoredom in the Old Teſtament; and the great powers which ſpread idolatry in the world were characterized under the image of a great whore: in which manner of ſpeaking the writers of the Old Teſtament had led the way; and no body is at a loſs to underſtand their meaning, when they charged the people with going a whoring after other Gods: and there is as little reaſon to miſunderſtand the council; for what more have they done, than to forbid idolatry, and all the impurities that attended it?

What has been ſaid in few words (very few, the importance of the ſubject conſidered) may ſhew us the foundation and the proper bounds of church authority in holy Scripture; and they ſhew us at the ſame time the true foundation upon which our reformation from the church of Rome ſtands. If the church of Rome aſks us, why we have departed from ſome articles, which they account articles of faith; our anſwer is, becauſe they are no part of *the faith once delivered to the ſaints*: if they urge us with the authority of the church which has received them; our anſwer is, no church has, nor have all churches together, any authority to make articles of faith; that *Chriſt Jeſus was the author and the finiſher of the faith*, to which nothing can be added, from

which nothing can be taken: if they aſk us, why we have diſcarded much of their ceremony and diſcipline; we may, without entering into the merit of particular caſes, anſwer, that the church of England has as much authority to appoint rules of order and diſcipline for their members, as the church of Rome has for theirs; that theſe rules have been ſettled upon prudential conſiderations of the circumſtances of England, of which the church of England was a far better judge than the church of Rome. But,

Secondly, If, according to the apoſtolical rule in the text, we are to *contend for the faith once delivered to the ſaints*, the queſtion will be, where we are to find this faith, and how to diſtinguiſh it from the addition of later ages?

When our Saviour came into the world, the caſe of the Jewiſh church was in this reſpect the ſame with ours: the evil had been long growing, and the ancient prophets had taken notice of it. In the prophet Iſaiah God reproves the nation for this crime, that *their fear towards him was taught by the precept of men*, ch. xxix. ver. 13. But yet, notwithſtanding theſe admonitions, in our Saviour's time the traditions were in ſuch eſteem, that they were appealed to in every caſe as a deciſive authority: and the Scribes and Phariſees were ſo ſecure in this point, that they challenge our Lord to anſwer this queſtion, *Why do thy diſciples tranſgreſs the tradition of the elders?* Matt. xv. 2. The very queſtion this, which is daily put to us by the church of Rome, and the darling point inſiſted on by their emiſſaries, by which they ſcare ignorant people into a blind ſubmiſſion to their authority. But hear our Sa-

viour's anſwer to the queſtion, when put to him: *Why do you alſo tranſgreſs the commandments of God by your tradition?* A queſtion hard to be anſwered, and which the great rulers of the church of Rome ſhould conſider well; for they are much concerned in it.

If the church of Rome pretends to have received by oral tradition doctrines derived originally from the Apoſtles, the Jewiſh doctors had the ſame plea, and referred their traditions up to Moſes, from whom, as they ſuppoſe, they received them, by an uninterrupted ſucceſſion continued to their own times.

The Jews had the writings of Moſes and the Prophets, and the church of Rome has the writings of the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts: but neither did the Jews allow their Scriptures, nor does the church of Rome allow theirs, to be a complete rule; but both recur to tradition to ſupply what they ſuppoſe to be wanting in their ſacred writings. But now conſider how our bleſſed Saviour treated this pretence of the Jewiſh church, and it will be a very good direction to us how to behave in a caſe which is ſo very much the ſame: he ſpeaks of them as human inventions: as doctrines of their own, and not doctrines of God: *Laying aſide the commandment of God,* ſays he, *ye hold the tradition of men.* Mark vii. 8. And again, ver. 9. *Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.* In the following verſes he ſhews them how their tradition contradicted the law of Moſes, and then tells them, *You make the word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered*: manifeſtly conſider-

ing the written law of Moſes as the commandment of God, and the traditions of the elders as the law of men, and of their own making.

Moſes and the Prophets make the Scripture of the Jews, and to them our Lord conſtantly appeals: he bids the Jews *ſearch the Scriptures*; tells them, *they err, not knowing the Scriptures*; and when the Phariſees put a queſtion to him concerning divorce, tempting him, his anſwer is, *What did Moſes command you?* And when he told the Phariſees, that on the two commandments, of loving God and our neighbour, *hang all the law and the prophets*, he plainly told them, that the law and the prophets contained the whole of their religion, and that they had no other rule to go by: for had he conſidered the traditions of the elders, as a rule of religion, he muſt have reduced them to his general precepts likewiſe.

In the well-known parable of the rich man and Lazarus, our Saviour has, in the perſon of Abraham, fully determined this point. The rich man deſires that Lazarus may be ſent from the dead to warn his brethren that they come not to that place of torment: Abraham refuſes this requeſt for this reaſon, becauſe his brethren wanted no means to inſtruct them in the right way. What was their rule then? Abraham tells him, *They have Moſes and the Prophets; let them hear them.*

The application of this caſe is ſo eaſily made to our own, that there is hardly any reaſon to inſiſt on it particularly. The Jewiſh church had Moſes and the Prophets, and abounded with traditions of their own, taught and received as eſſential to their

religion. What our Saviour thought of their traditions, what of the law and the prophets, you have heard. The Chriſtian church likewiſe has the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts; they have alſo too many traditionary doctrines, which have no foundation in Holy Writ: what are we to do then? Do we want better authority than that of our Saviour to reject the traditions of men, and to hold faſt the doctrine of the Apoſtles and Prophets of the Goſpel; that is, as St. Jude exhorts us, to *contend for the faith once delivered to the ſaints?*

DISCOURSE LXII.

ROMANS xiii. 1.

Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

WE have, in this and the following verſes, the duty which ſubjects owe to their temporal governors, both taught and maintained by ſeveral reaſons and arguments: the ſenſe and propriety of which arguments clearly to underſtand, it will be neceſſary for us to conſider the circumſtances of the time, and place, and perſons here concerned.

There is no appearance in the Goſpel that our Saviour intended to make any alterations in the civil governments of the world. He came upon another errand, of quite a different nature: he never purpoſely enters upon the ſubject of government, that being no neceſſary part of his doctrine; but treats of it only as he was led by particular occaſions.

In the twenty-ſecond chapter of St. Matthew, we find a captious queſtion put to him by the Phariſees, Whether it were lawful to pay tribute to the Roman Emperor, or not? The queſtion aroſe from

hence: there was at that time a ſect among the Jews, who held it to be unlawful to pay any tribute to the Roman Emperor, or to yield any obedience to his laws. The author of this opinion was Judas of Galilee; who, when the Roman Emperor ordered the nation to be taxed, raiſed upon that account a great rebellion; perſuading the people to ſtand by their liberties, and not to ſubmit to ſuch a mark of ſlavery, as paying of tribute. The fate of this man is related fully by Joſephus; and is mentioned likewiſe by Gamaliel in Acts v. 37. *After this man roſe up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he alſo periſhed, and all, even as many as obeyed him, were diſperſed.* But though they were for the preſent diſperſed, yet by degrees they gathered ſtrength, and were the authors of many troubles; and in the reign of Claudius were ſtrong enough to ravage and deſtroy many places in Samaria. Their pretence for freedom was, as we learn from St. Chryſoſtom, that they were the ſervants of the Lord, and therefore owed no ſubjection to any human creature; that they were the freemen of God, and ought not therefore to be the ſlaves, or the ſubjects of men. This ſect went by the name of Galileans; the author of it being of that country, as likewiſe many of his followers.

Now it is well known that this was a name by which the Chriſtians went in the firſt ages: they are mentioned under this name by ſeveral heathen writers; and that it was in uſe among all who ſpoke contemptuouſly of Chriſt and his religion, even ſo late as in Julian's time, we learn from his writings

ſtill remaining, where he often ſpeaks of the Chriſtians under the name of Galileans. And hence it came to paſs, that the Chriſtians going by the name of Galileans were generally thought by the heathens to entertain the ſame opinions with the ſect of that name; that is, they were taken to be men of ſeditious principles, who refuſed obedience to earthly princes, and were for ſetting up an independent government of their own. Thus when Tertullus the orator accuſes St. Paul, he charges him with being *a peſtilent fellow, a mover of ſedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the ſect of the Nazarenes*, Acts xxiv. 5. Of this calumny we find the unbelieving Jews alſo making their advantage againſt the Chriſtians; for thus they accuſe them to the magiſtrates of Theſſalonica, *Theſe who have turned the world upſide down are come hither alſo*, Acts xvii. 6.

Upon this ground then it was that the Phariſees put that inſidious queſtion to our Saviour, *Is it lawful to pay tribute to Cæſar?* hoping, no doubt, to have found ſomething whereof to have impeached him before the Roman governor. The collectors of tax ſeem likewiſe to have had the ſame jealouſy concerning our Saviour, when in the ſeventeenth of St. Matthew they inquire of St. Peter, whether his Maſter would pay tribute, or no? for it is probable by their queſtion that they took our Lord for one of the new teachers, who ſet up in defiance to the Roman Emperor: to which St. Peter anſwers, Yes. And our Saviour, though he intimates that he ought to have been exempted from paying tribute, yet, knowing what ſuſpicions there were concerning him,

and what uſe would have been made of his refuſal, orders St. Peter to go to the ſea, and caſt an hook, and take the fiſh that ſhould come up, and open his mouth, where he ſhould find a piece of money: That take, ſays he, and give them as tribute for me and yourſelf, *leſt we ſhould offend them.*

Now, though our Saviour's buſineſs was not either to limit or to enlarge the civil governments of the world, yet this ſcandal which he and his diſciples lay under, urged both him and them to vindicate themſelves, and to teach their followers ſuch obedience and ſubmiſſion to the higher powers, as might leave no pretence for ſuch an accuſation: accordingly our Saviour having drawn a confeſſion from the Phariſees, that the tribute-money belonged to Cæſar, anſwers, that they ſhould *render to Cæſar the things which were Cæſar's.*

That the Apoſtles likewiſe had reference to the ſame ſcandal in preſſing obedience of all kinds upon their diſciples, whether conſidered as ſubjects, or ſervants, or wives, or children, is evident from hence, that they almoſt always cloſe their inſtructions of this ſort with this argument, *That the word of God be not blaſphemed* or *evil ſpoken of:* an argument which in its own nature has no nearer relation to civil obedience than to any other good work; and it is as proper to exhort men to temperance and ſobriety, to charity, and other the like virtues, that no ſcandal may be brought on the Goſpel, as it is to exhort them to obedience to their ſuperiors. This motive therefore being almoſt ever urged in the caſe of obedience, ſhews plainly that the Chriſtians were liable to reproach in this caſe more than any

other. Our Lord bids St. Peter pay the tribute, *leſt*, ſays he, *we ſhould offend them:* and thus St. Paul, in his Epiſtle to Titus, ch. ii. ver. 5. orders Titus to admoniſh *wives to be obedient to their own huſbands, that the word of God be not blaſphemed*; and, ver. 10. to exhort *ſervants to be obedient to their own maſters, and to pleaſe them well in all things, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things:* ſo likewiſe in the firſt Epiſtle to Timothy, ch. vi. ver. 1. the Apoſtle gives this exhortation, *Let as many ſervants as are under the yoke count their own maſters worthy of all honour*; and then he repeats the forementioned reaſon, *that the name of God and his doctrine be not blaſphemed:* thus likewiſe St. Peter, preſſing obedience to governors, gives this reaſon for it, *For ſo is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men*, 1 Pet. ii. 15. that is, of ſuch men as ſcandalize the doctrine of the Goſpel, as if it taught us to claim a freedom inconſiſtent with the obedience that ſubjects and ſervants and children owed to their reſpective ſuperiors: and, with regard to this abuſed notion of Chriſtian freedom, the Apoſtle adds, in the very next verſe, *As free, and not uſing your liberty for a cloke of maliciouſneſs, but as the ſervants of God.* Beſides theſe reaſons, drawn from the Apoſtles' own writings, to ſhew with what view they ſo frequently inſiſted upon, and inculcated obedience of all kinds, we have to the ſame purpoſe the expreſs authority of St. Jerom and St. Chryſoſtom. St. Jerom, in his comment upon the Epiſtle to Titus, at theſe words, *Put them in mind to be ſubject to principalities and powers*, gives this reaſon

why the Apoſtle there, and elſewhere, inſiſts on the obligations which Chriſtians were under to obey their rulers: *Quia Judæ Galilæi per illud tempus dogma adhuc vigebat, et habebat plurimos ſectatores—Becauſe the doctrine of Judas of Galilee yet prevailed at that time, and had many followers.* St. Chryſoſtom, in his comment upon the thirteenth of the Romans, teaches us the ſame thing: Καὶ γὰρ πολὺς περιεφέρετο λόγος τότε, ἐπὶ ςάσει καὶ καινοτομίᾳ διαβάλλων τὺς ἀποςόλυς, καὶ ὡς ἐπ' ἀνατροπῇ τῶν κοινῶν νόμων, ἅπαντα καὶ ποιῦνται καὶ λέγονται—*For there was at that time a ſtrong report that the Apoſtles were ſeditious and innovators, and that their principles and practices tended to the ſubverſion of the common laws.*

From this account it is eaſy to ſee what made the Apoſtles ſo frequently, ſo earneſtly preſs their new converts to ſhew a more than ordinary obedience to their maſters and governors: the honour of Chriſt and the Goſpel was nearly concerned in their behaviour, which ought to be dearer to them than their lives, and to outweigh all other conſiderations whatever; and therefore they ought to bear every thing rather than give any umbrage to the enemies of the Goſpel, by pretending upon any account, how plauſible ſoever, to withſtand the commands of their lawful governors. And for this reaſon St. Paul more eſpecially labours the point, when he writes to the Chriſtians at Rome, which was the ordinary reſidence of the Emperor, and where any the leaſt diſorder would be the ſooneſt taken notice of, and moſt improved to the prejudice of the Goſpel. And if you examine what St. Paul has taught concerning obedience and ſubjection to the higher

powers, you will find it anſwer exactly to theſe circumſtances now ſet before you, and to be built upon reaſons purpoſely adapted to convince the error of the Galileans and ſome judaizing Chriſtians, and to require ſuch an exact and ſcrupulous obedience, as might clear the Goſpel and its profeſſors from the ſcandal thrown on them by the heathen world.

Let every ſoul, ſays he, *be ſubject unto the higher powers.* This is the doctrine laid down in oppoſition to ſuch as taught that there were no higher powers who had any claim to their obedience, but that they were under the immediate government of God, and therefore owed no ſubjection to man. The Apoſtle ſupports his doctrine with arguments peculiarly adapted to combat the error he oppoſes, as you will perceive in the following words: *For there is no power*, ſays he, *but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.* As if he had ſaid, You argue that you ought to be ſubject to God only, and to acknowledge no other power or authority but his. What you ſay is true: but ſo far is this reaſon from exempting you from the ſubjection to temporal power, that, well conſidered, it will prove juſt the contrary: for the power of the magiſtrate is a power delegated from God, and therefore more eſpecially to be regarded by thoſe who pretend in a peculiar manner to be the ſervants of God. It was obvious to object againſt this reaſoning, That the powers then in being could not be the powers ordained by God, becauſe they ſo evidently thwarted all his purpoſes: they had put to death the Lord of life; they perſecuted his followers; they were the

ſupporters of ſuperſtition and idolatry, and the main obſtacle in the way of the Goſpel: to prevent which ſurmiſes the Apoſtle purpoſely adds, *The powers which be*, αἱ δὲ οὖσαι ἐξουσίαι, the powers which *now be*, are ordained of God. From theſe poſitions he draws the conſequence in direct oppoſition to the principles and practices of thoſe who were deſpiſers of government: *Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the power reſiſteth the ordinance of God.* To reſiſt the ordinance of God was certainly inconſiſtent with their profeſſion who pretended to dedicate themſelves to the obedience of God; and ſo entirely, that for that reaſon they would own no obedience to any one elſe, leſt they ſhould ſeem to ſet up another to ſhare with God in his right to their ſervice. The Apoſtle ſo far allows their principle, as to argue from it, and ſhews them, that they cannot reſiſt the civil power conſiſtently with their reſolutions of obeying God; becauſe ſubmitting to our earthly princes is part of the obedience which God requires from us. If we inquire in what particular ſenſe the rulers of the world may be ſaid to be the ordinance of God, and to derive their power and authority from him; we ſhall find that the ſtate of the world requires that there ſhould be ſome to rule, inveſted with power to protect the innocent, and to defend the weak from the violence of the oppreſſor: and therefore government is agreeable to the will of God; and to pretend an exemption from it would be acting in oppoſition to his will and the order of his eſtabliſhment.

As ſome pretended to withdraw their obedience from the prince, becauſe they had been made par-

takers of the freedom of the Goſpel; ſo others, who were in a ſtate of ſervitude, thought they had a right to throw off their bondage, ſuppoſing a ſtate of ſlavery to be inconſiſtent with the liberty of the Goſpel of Chriſt: they went upon the ſame reaſon which the others did, and pleaded their relation to God and Chriſt as a full releaſe from the condition of ſlaves. The Apoſtle therefore uſes the ſame way of arguing to them, and exhorts them to yield obedience to their maſters as unto the Lord, as unto God; ſhewing them that their maſters, with reſpect to temporal affairs, ſtood in the place of God; and they were therefore to ſubmit unto them as unto God. Thus in the ſeventh chapter of the firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians the Apoſtle lays down this general rule, *Let every man abide in the ſame calling wherein he is called*; that is, as he explains himſelf, whether he be ſervant, or whether he be free, let him not think that his condition is repugnant to his religion: if he be ſervant, let him ſo continue. *Servants*, ſays he, in the ſixth of the Epheſians, *be obedient unto them that are your maſters according to the fleſh, with fear and trembling, in ſingleneſs of your heart, as unto Chriſt; not with eye-ſervice, as men-pleaſers; but as the ſervants of Chriſt, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing ſervice, as to the Lord, and not to men.* The ſame is repeated, with ſome ſmall variety of expreſſion, in the third of the Coloſſians: and in 1 Tim. vi. he treats of this matter with ſome warmth, and affirms, that this doctrine of obedience is the law of God, and that whoever denies it *conſents not to wholeſome words, even the words of our Lord Jeſus*

Chriſt, and to the doctrine which is according to godlineſs; but is proud, knowing nothing, doting about queſtions and ſtrife of words—ſuppoſing gain to be godlineſs. In all which it is plain he refers to the opinion of ſuch as taught that the Goſpel had introduced a perfect ſtate of freedom, diſſolving all the ancient ties between maſters and ſervants: in oppoſition to which, he teaches them, that their being Chriſtians ſhould make them better, not worſe ſervants; for that they ought to obey from the heart, as ſerving God, and not men. St. Peter likewiſe uſes the ſame argument with the ſame view: *Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake.* Hence then it is plain, that the Apoſtle's argument is directed againſt thoſe principally, who were for diſſolving all the obligations between the prince and the ſubject; who were for making religion the cloak of diſloyalty, and for throwing down all power and authority of earthly princes, upon the ſpecious pretence of ſetting up the Lord Jeſus. And therefore, as to the original of the prince's power, we may, upon the Apoſtle's word, aſſert it to be divine, as being derived immediately from God, and uſed and exerciſed in his name, and by his authority.

To proceed: the Apoſtle uſes a ſecond argument to enforce his doctrine laid down at firſt in the words of the text, *Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers.* And here the firſt doubt is, where the argument begins; for the words immediately following thoſe laſt treated of may either be taken as the firſt of the ſecond argument, or as a farther concluſion drawn from the firſt: *And they that reſiſt*

ſhall receive to themſelves damnation. If they who reſiſt the power do reſiſt the ordinance of God, it may certainly be affirmed by evident conſequence, that they who reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves damnation; ſo evident a conſequence, that it can loſe nothing of its force, though theſe words ſhould not be underſtood to contain it, but ſhould be taken as introducing a new argument, as upon the whole I incline to think they ought to be taken. For the words immediately following contain a reaſon of ſomething going before; *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil:* but this will not prove that all who reſiſt ſhall be damned; for rulers are not the judges in the caſe of damnation: but if we underſtand the Apoſtle in theſe words, *All who reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves damnation,* as entering upon a new topic, and ſetting forth the certain evil conſequences which even in this life ſhould attend the ſeditious, who would render themſelves juſtly obnoxious to the powers of the world, and be liable to their cenſure, it then very properly follows, *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil.*

To ſhew that the language in the original admits of this ſenſe, or that the preſent diviſion of verſes is no authority on one ſide or the other, is a labour I may well ſave myſelf in this audience. Let us go on then to conſider the argument: it is drawn from the common topic of hope and fear, and repreſents to us the danger of diſobeying our governors, by ſetting before us not only their power, but their right and their duty to puniſh, when we refuſe to acknowledge their authority: and, by ſhewing the prince's duty to puniſh ſuch offenders, in conſe-

quence of the commiſſion given him by God, it tacitly warns us to expect no protection from God againſt the juſt anger and indignation of our princes; ſince in puniſhing the ſtubborn offenders they do but execute the will and command of God: in which caſe it is abſurd to depend upon any aſſiſtance or protection from him, in oppoſition to his own authority delegated to earthly powers.

The Goſpel does, in every page, encourage its diſciples to bear up againſt the afflictions of the world, to rejoice when they are perſecuted and evil intreated, and to be exceeding glad, becauſe their reward ſhall be great in heaven: but, leſt thoſe who ſuffered as ſeditious ſubjects ſhould entertain themſelves with theſe hopes, the Apoſtle takes care to repreſent the prince as acting by the will and power of God, in puniſhing ſuch offenders. What fruit then could thoſe ſufferings yield, which were not only the effect of man's wrath, but alſo of the juſtice of God? St. Peter, on the ſame ſubject, has evidently the ſame view before him: *If ye be reproached*, ſays he, *for the name of Chriſt, happy are ye; for the ſpirit of glory and of God reſteth on you— But let none of you ſuffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer:* for, as he had before obſerved, *What glory is it, if, when ye ſhall be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently?*

St. Paul's ſecond argument therefore is not a mere prudential motive to obedience, ſhewing us what may probably be expected from an angry governor; but goes farther, and teaches that we ſhall not only ſuffer, but alſo deſerve to ſuffer; which every Chriſtian ought rather to fear than the evil

itſelf. The particular ſteps of the argument are as follow: *They that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves damnation*, i. e. puniſhment, or judgment. The reaſon follows: *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.* It is plain here, from the force of the inference, that, by *good works*, obedience is eſpecially meant; and, by *evil works*, reſiſtance; for otherwiſe the Apoſtle's reaſon will not contain the proof of his doctrine: for it is not certain that thoſe who reſiſt ſhall be puniſhed, becauſe rulers are a terror to evil works, unleſs reſiſtance be meant, or included, in evil works: and yet the Apoſtle is now diſputing with thoſe who thought the Goſpel juſtified them in not ſubmitting to their governors, and who could not therefore think the reſiſtance here ſpoken of an evil work. Does he then beg this point, of all others in this controverſy the moſt material? No: but he builds on the ſtrength of his firſt argument, where he had ſhewn, that whoever reſiſts the power reſiſteth the ordinance of God; which is enough to prove reſiſtance an evil work: which being proved, he goes on to ſhew the prince's power over ſuch workers of iniquity: *Wilt thou then*, ſays he, *not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame.* This was a ſtrange aſſertion, if underſtood of good works in general: St. Paul knew ſurely, that to obey the Goſpel, to reject idolatry, to renounce the polluted feaſts of the Gentiles, was to do good; yet he knew that thoſe who did ſo, far from having the praiſe of the rulers, were daily puniſhed and tormented by them: he knew that to preach the Goſpel was a good work;

and yet he knew that he for ſo doing had been in perils often, in bonds and impriſonments, and in danger of his life. How then could he aſſure his converts, that if they did that which was good they ſhould have praiſe of their rulers, when they felt the contrary every day? But this difficulty vaniſhes, if we take *good* in that limited ſenſe in which the Apoſtle uſes it: *Rulers*, ſays he, *are not a terror to good works, but to evil.* It naturally follows, *Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame.* It is evident, by the courſe of reaſoning, that the *good* in the latter part of the verſe muſt mean the ſame thing with *good works* in the firſt part; and I obſerved before, that the Apoſtle's argument neceſſarily required that, by *good works*, we ſhould eſpecially underſtand the work of *obedience:* conſequently, when the Apoſtle ſays, *Do that which is good*, his meaning is, *Pay due obedience.* And then his propoſition is univerſally true: for obedience is a good work; and, let princes be what they will, they will always praiſe and encourage obedience: which is one good reaſon for obeying, in all caſes, as far as we can; for we are ſure to get this by it, a quiet life, at leaſt.

Beſides, this expoſition ſuits with St. Paul's main deſign; which was to inculcate obedience to the higher power. What other good then could he properly recommend on this ſubject? Temperance, chaſtity, charity, and all other virtues, were out of this queſtion: obedience was the thing doubted of. If the Apoſtle then keeps to his point, the good thing he recommends muſt needs be the good of obedience; and the word in the original, which is

rendered by the word *good* in our tranſlation, is appropriated both by St. Paul and St. Peter to denote the good of obedience, in oppoſition to the evil ſpirit which ſet a government at nought. The promiſe made to obedience is in theſe words, *Thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame.* What is meant by *praiſe*, may be underſtood by the parallel place in St. Peter, who ſpeaks of governors ſent *for the puniſhment of evil-doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well:* where praiſe, being oppoſed to puniſhment, muſt denote protection and encouragement; which are the only proper rewards which good ſubjects can expect from their governors: and ſo it ſignifies in the place before us. And this will help us to underſtand the following words: *For he is the miniſter of God to thee for good.* The Apoſtle had promiſed *reward* to the obedient: he ſupports it by this reaſon; for he, the ruler, is *the miniſter of God to thee for good.* To be a miniſter for good then, muſt denote his being appointed by God as a diſpenſer of rewards; or elſe the argument is lame: for, if any other good be meant, the conſequence is falſe; for it does not follow, that the obedient ſhall be rewarded, becauſe the prince is a miniſter of ſome other good; which is no way related to rewarding the good: but, if he be appointed by God to diſpenſe rewards to thoſe who do well, and if obedience be the good work, I have then good reaſon to expect reward for my obedience.

And this ſenſe will appear undeniably to be the true one, by comparing the former and latter part of the verſe together: for the Apoſtle goes on, *But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth*

not the ſword in vain. Then he adds the very ſame argument which he had uſed before; *for he is the miniſter of God:* a miniſter for what? He had before, where he treated of him as a diſpenſer of rewards, called him a miniſter of God for good: here he ſpeaks of him as a diſpenſer of puniſhment; he ſhould therefore have called him a miniſter of God *for evil:* but that was too harſh an expreſſion; and therefore he uſes a periphraſis inſtead of it: for he is the miniſter of God, *a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.* This ſhews us how to expound his being a miniſter for good, that is, a protector and encourager to him that doth well. Compare all the parts, and I think there can be no doubt. The evil are threatened: why? Becauſe the ruler is the miniſter of God: the miniſter, to what purpoſe? He tells you: a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil. On the other ſide, the obedient are encouraged to expect reward: Why? For the ſame reaſon; becauſe the ruler is a miniſter of God for this purpoſe alſo: and, conſequently, a miniſter for good muſt denote a diſpenſer of good to him that doth good.

What good we are to expect from kings and governors St. Paul has told us; requiring that we ſhould *pray for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty,* 1 Tim. ii. 2. The peace and quiet of ſociety is the very end of temporal government; and, when it is duly promoted by thoſe in authority, then have they a juſt claim to be eſteemed as miniſters of God for good to the people; who, in return for this good received of the

prince, are bound on their part to yield obedience and ſubmiſſion; which is the thing will entitle them to the praiſe and protection of thoſe in authority over them.

Theſe are the two arguments by which St. Paul ſupports his doctrine of obedience: that I have rightly divided them he himſelf ſhall bear witneſs, who in the next verſe ſums up his reaſoning in theſe words; *Wherefore ye muſt needs be ſubject, not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake.* You ſee he refers to two arguments, and two only: one drawn from wrath, one from conſcience. The argument from wrath reſpects the preſent life and the magiſtrate's power: for the wrath of God is included in the argument from conſcience, which indeed is no argument without it; for what is conſcience, where there is no fear of God? You muſt then ſubmit for wrath, becauſe the magiſtrate has the power of God to execute wrath on him that doth evil: you muſt ſubmit for conſcience; for he that reſiſteth the power reſiſteth the ordinance of God. The ſixth verſe contains no new argument; but mentions a particular inſtance of obedience, the paying tribute; which is therefore particularly mentioned, becauſe, as I before obſerved, it was the very ground of this diſpute.

I have but one thing more to obſerve upon St. Paul, which is, that under the duties of ſubjection he comprehends not only thoſe owing to kings and princes, but thoſe owing to every ſuperior, nay, thoſe owing even to our equals: *Render*, ſays he, *to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due*; *cuſtom*

to whom cuſtom; *fear to whom fear*; *honour to whom honour*; and concludes with this general exhortation, *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another*; referring even the duties of love to this head of ſubjection. I mention this now for the uſe I ſhall make of it hereafter.

It is plain that the Apoſtle's concern was with ſuch as denied even the right of government, and were for being every man his own king: it was not therefore before him to conſider diſtinctly the meaſures and limits of the power of earthly princes; nor can the argument be extended to reach this point. He aſſerts the magiſtrate to be ordained of God, and the rulers power to be the ordinance of God: but it will not from hence appear what are the limits of this power; for all power ordained by God is not infinite, nor of the ſame extent. All our natural powers are ordained by God, and he has divided to every man as ſeemeth beſt to him. The leaſt power is his ordinance, as well as the greateſt: and therefore the extent of power cannot appear from this, that it is the ordinance of God; ſince all power, whether great or little, is ordained by him. Nor has the Scripture, that I know of, ever meddled with this point: it has commanded obedience to all governors, and left us the laws and conſtitutions of our country to know who they are, and what they are.

The Apoſtle, in teaching this doctrine, was chiefly concerned for the honour of the Goſpel; and exhorted to obedience, that the name of God and of Chriſt might not be blaſphemed. Had St. Paul

taught the Chriſtians at Rome, that the Emperor was ordained by God for their good, and that they were bound to obey him as long as he was good to them, and no longer; would this, do you think, have cleared them of the ſcandal they lay under of being enemies to government? Would they have had *praiſe* of the power for this doctrine? No: it would rather have juſtified all the reproaches caſt on them, and confirmed the powers of the world in the opinion, that, if ever Chriſtianity prevailed, their authority muſt ſink.

I cannot conclude my diſcourſe without taking notice of St. Peter's doctrine upon this ſubject. His Epiſtle is directed to the ſtrangers ſcattered throughout divers countries: for in the ninth year of the Emperor Claudius, the Jews, under which name the Chriſtians were comprehended, as is plain from the eighteenth of the Acts, were baniſhed Rome for tumults and ſeditions occaſioned by their diſputes. This baniſhment is mentioned by Suetonius, and the writer of the Acts in the place laſt quoted. St. Peter therefore, in his Epiſtle, was neceſſarily to mention and preſs obedience, the want of which had occaſioned their preſent diſtreſs. Thus then he exhorts his ſcattered flock: *Dearly beloved, I beſeech you, as ſtrangers and pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul; having your converſation honeſt among the Gentiles: that whereas they ſpeak againſt you as evil-doers*; that is, as diſobedient ſubjects, which is alſo, as I ſhewed, St. Paul's notion of evil-doers; *they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of viſitation.* Then follows the general precept: *Submit*

yourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake; whether it be to the king, or to governors; and the like*.

Here then St. Peter is ſuppoſed to have determined the great point, and taught us that kings are the ordinance of man, made by the people: if he has, I am ſure he has contradicted St. Paul, who has expreſsly told us, that *the powers which be are ordained of God:* which clear doctrine of St. Paul ſhould, I think, make us cautious how we expound St. Peter to a different meaning. St. Peter's original words are, πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει. How they came to be rendered, *to every ordinance of man*, I profeſs myſelf not to underſtand. Κτίσις ſignifies ſometimes in Scripture *a creature*, and the adjective joined with it ſignifies *human:* according to which St. Peter's doctrine is plain; Submit yourſelves to every human

* If we compare St. Peter and St. Paul together, and conſider the ſubject they were upon, we ſhall find it neceſſary to take the τὸ ἀγαθὸν in the reſtrained ſenſe here mentioned: for what other good could they mean, conſiſtently with their argument and their ſubject? for the only evil thing which they had to contend with was an oppoſition to all government in general; the good therefore they would recommend was neceſſarily to be ſubmiſſion in general. In the ſame reſtrained ſenſe St. Peter ſometimes uſes καλὸν, 1 Ep. ii. 12. &c. ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν, ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύοντες, δοξάσωσι τὸν Θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς. At ver. 15. and at ver. 20. it plainly appears that ἀγαθοποιῶν is equivalent to καλοποιῶν, and that both expreſſions mean a general ſubmiſſion to government. We meet with the ſame word again in the courſe of the argument, ch. iii. ver. 5. &c. where St. Peter having mentioned the duty of ſubmiſſion, which Sarah paid to Abraham, exhorts wives to follow her example, whoſe daughters they were, ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι; which he explains by ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσι. So that there can be no doubt of the uſe of the word in this place.

creature, or to every man, for the Lord's ſake. How κτίσις ἀνθρωπίνη ſhould ſignify a creature, or any thing elſe made by man, I know not: ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία is not wiſdom made by man, but the wiſdom which man has given him by God: ſo κτίσις ἀνθρωπίνη is not a creature made by man, but *an human creature:* and that this is St. Peter's true meaning will appear from the whole tenor of his diſcourſe. It is uſual with the beſt writers to ſet down the doctrine in general words, and then to deduce the particulars: this is St. Peter's method in the place before us: Submit, ſays he, yourſelves to every human creature. This is the general point. He immediately deſcends to particulars: he begins with the king, as ſupreme; goes from him to governors appointed by him: at the eighteenth verſe he comes to ſervants, whom he commands to be ſubject to their maſters with all fear: when he has done with them, he goes to wives, ordering them to be in ſubjection to their own huſbands. All theſe particulars are plainly included in the general rule: and, conſequently, there is as much reaſon to ſay, from St. Peter, that the huſband of every woman is made by the people, as that the king of every country is: nay, St. Peter goes lower; and, as a precept deducible from his general rule, he commands us to love the brotherhood: ſo that I may as well ſay that I made my brother, becauſe I muſt love him, as that I made my king, becauſe I muſt obey him. I obſerved to you before how St. Paul derived the duties of ſubjection ſo low as to the love of one another: St. Peter, you ſee, does the ſame. St. Paul's general rule is, ch. xiii. ver. 7. *Render to all their dues:* St. Peter's is, *Submit to every*

human creature. St. Paul concludes, ver. 8. *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another*: St. Peter, ch. v. ver. 5. *Yea, all of you be ſubject one to another.* You ſee the ſame reaſoning in both, that both take in all degrees of duty into the doctrine of ſubmiſſion.

You ſee how nearly the Apoſtles agree: if St. Paul has ſaid, that the higher powers are ordained of God; has not St. Peter ſaid as much, by telling us, that ſo is the will of God, that with well-doing we may put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men? If St. Paul has ſaid, we muſt obey for conſcience ſake; are we not under the ſame obligation, by knowing, from St. Peter, that obedience is the will of God?

The commentators have given themſelves unneceſſary trouble, in inquiring into the characters of the princes at the time theſe Epiſtles were written; for the diſpute was with thoſe who rejected all ſorts of government, whether they were under good or bad princes: with the temporal rights of princes they meddled not. St. Peter, who wrote to the diſperſed in Aſia, where the governments had always been deſpotic, exhorted them, in the firſt place, to due obedience to the king, and then to thoſe who were put in authority under him: whereas St. Paul, in writing to the Romans, where the form of government was not fully eſtabliſhed, being in the hands of the Emperor, ſometimes with and ſometimes without the concurrence of the ſenate, made choice of an expreſſion that has avoided that difficulty, and directs obedience to be paid to the higher powers, without determining who they

were; which was a point in which he had no right to interpoſe his authority.

I ſhall leave this ſubject without drawing any conſequences, excepting one only, for the ſake of which I entered into this inquiry; namely, That the Scriptures are not to be tortured to ſpeak in favour of one ſide or another; for they ſtand clear of all diſputes about the rights of princes and ſubjects: ſo that ſuch diſputes muſt be left to be decided by principles of natural equity and the conſtitutions of the country.

DISCOURSE LXIII.

GENESIS xviii. 19.

For I know him, that he will command his children, and his houſehold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath ſpoken of him.

THE words of the text are the words of the Lord concerning Abraham, the father of the faithful; and they contain the reaſon why the Lord made choice of Abraham, to diſtinguiſh him from the reſt of the world, to make of him *a great and mighty nation*, a nation to whom ſhould be *committed the oracles of God. Abraham*, ſays the Lord in the verſe before the text, *ſhall ſurely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth ſhall be bleſſed in him.*

It has been matter of great difficulty with curious inquirers to aſſign the reaſons of God's particular regard to Abraham and his poſterity, to whom he made himſelf known in a very particular manner; whilſt the reſt of the nations of the earth were permitted to continue in ignorance and ſuperſtition. I intend not to examine all the reaſons that have, or

may be aſſigned for this diſpenſation of providence; but, ſince God himſelf has been pleaſed to give one reaſon for his particular regard to Abraham, it highly concerns us to conſider it, as holding forth to us the very beſt inſtruction by what means we may render ourſelves acceptable to God, and draw down a bleſſing upon ourſelves and our poſterity: *Abraham ſhall ſurely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth ſhall be bleſſed in him: for I know him, that he will command his children, and his houſehold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath ſpoken of him.*

You ſee now the connection of the text with the verſe that goes before it, and the reaſon given for the diſtinguiſhing mercy beſtowed on Abraham: God ſaw that Abraham would ſo rule and govern his children and his houſehold, as to make them keep the way of the Lord, and do juſtice and judgment; and therefore he determined to raiſe him into *a great and mighty nation.* This reaſon is plainly founded on theſe two propoſitions, and ſuppoſes the truth of them, *viz.* Firſt, That it is the duty of every father and maſter of a family ſo to command his children and houſehold that they ſhall keep the way of the Lord: and, Secondly, That the ſame duty is incumbent on the governors and magiſtrates of all nations. If you ſuppoſe that the virtue commended in Abraham is proper only to fathers and maſters of families, and has no relation to the duty of a public magiſtrate, the reaſon given in the text for making Abraham *a great and*

mighty nation is a very abſurd one: for, if the magiſtrate has nothing to do to command the obſervance of the ways of the Lord, Abraham's diſpoſition ſo to govern and command could be no reaſon for making him the head of a great nation: nay, it would rather be a very good reaſon to keep all public authority out of his hands: for, if the magiſtrate tranſgreſſes the limits of his authority, whenever he uſes his authority for the preſervation of religion, to raiſe a man to be the head of a nation becauſe you foreſee he will ſo uſe his authority, is to raiſe him to be a magiſtrate becauſe you foreſee he will tranſgreſs the limits of his commiſſion. Since then God has declared that he raiſed Abraham to be a great nation, becauſe he foreſaw that he would command thoſe under his authority to keep the way of the Lord, he has at the ſame time declared it to be the duty of every magiſtrate ſo to command and govern the nation, the great family committed to his care, that the ways of the Lord, that juſtice and judgment may be obſerved.

It has been matter of great diſpute, whether government is derived from the paternal authority, and is only the extenſion of it, or from the conſent and choice of the people: a point of greater curioſity than uſe; ſince the rights of nations will be determined by their reſpective laws and uſages, and not by the ſpeculations of philoſophers. But, as to the caſe of virtue and religion, it is evident, that every magiſtrate's duty, with reſpect to his people, is the ſame with that which every father naturally has with reſpect to his children and houſehold,

Abraham was therefore to be made a great and mighty nation, becauſe he would command his children and houſehold to keep the way of the Lord: a manifeſt proof that the care and command which he exerciſed as father of the family was proper to be extended to whole nations; otherwiſe this care over his family could be no reaſon for extending his authority over a great and mighty nation. And indeed the magiſtrate's care with reſpect to the religion of his people, and the father's with reſpect to the religion of his family, are ſo much the ſame, that they muſt neceſſarily ſtand or fall together; for both have the ſame reaſons to ſupport them, and both are equally liable to the ſame objections. If the father of a family has his authority from God, and rules over not only his own children, but the ſervants and creatures of the Almighty, and ought therefore to have a concern for God and religion, is the caſe of the magiſtrate different? Are not his ſubjects alſo the creatures and ſervants of God? and is he not the miniſter and vicegerent of God, and therefore bound, in the firſt place, to have regard to his honour, who is the common maſter of him and of his ſervants? If the happineſs of a family, and of every member of it, conſiſts in a due conformity to the principles of virtue and reaſon, and it be therefore the father's duty, even out of natural affection to his children, to guard them againſt vice and immorality, is the happineſs of a kingdom, and the members of it, leſs concerned in the virtue of the people? or ought a prince leſs to regard the welfare and proſperity of

his people? Turn it which way you will, the arguments are ſtill the ſame, and equally applicable to both caſes.

If you object to the magiſtrate's authority in religion, that temporal rewards and puniſhments are improper to be employed in the cauſe of religion; are they not equally improper in the hands of a father, as of a prince? If the ſubjects have reaſon to direct them, and ought therefore to be left to themſelves in all matters of conſcience; are not your ſons and your daughters reaſonable creatures too? and have they not the ſame plea to make to exempt them from the authority of a father? If religion be ſomething internal, and of which the magiſtrate cannot judge, becauſe he knows not the heart of man; is a father better qualified to judge the heart of his ſon or daughter than the magiſtrate is to judge the hearts of his ſubjects? In every view the objections are equally frivolous, or equally ſtrong in both caſes.

From the text, thus opened and explained, I ſhall take an occaſion to inquire, wherein the care of religion, as well public as private, doth conſiſt; and to juſtify the means which are neceſſary to the ſupport of it.

If we conſider the nature and diſpoſition of mankind, we ſhall eaſily perceive that two things are eſpecially neceſſary to guard the practice of virtue and religion, inſtruction and correction: one, a proper remedy for the weakneſs of the underſtanding; the other, for the perverſeneſs of the will. Where theſe two are joined together, where the ſame perſon has a right to inſtruct and correct, the

inſtruction is properly authoritative; and this is the caſe both of parents and magiſtrates: and therefore Abraham's care for his family, which without doubt included inſtruction, is expreſſed by the word *command*; *He will command his children and his houſehold, that they ſhall keep the way of the Lord.* And the ſame precept, given by God to the children of Iſrael for the inſtruction of their poſterity, and which is called *teaching* their children in Deut. xi. 19. is, in ch. xxxii. ver. 46. called *commanding* their children: *And he ſaid unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I teſtify among you this day, which ye ſhall command your children to obſerve to do, all the words of this law.*

This duty princes cannot perform perſonally to all their people; and therefore there has been an order of men ſet apart to this work in every civilized nation in the world: and, upon the foot of natural religion, there is no queſtion to be made but that the ſupreme power in every nation has a full right to appoint and conſtitute theſe public teachers and miniſters of religion. The people of Rome had as good a title to chooſe prieſts as to chooſe conſuls; and had their religion been right, no fault could have been found in the conſtitution of their prieſthood. But this right was under the law of Moſes limited to one family; and the prieſthood under the Goſpel is confined to ſuch methods of conveyance as Chriſt and his Apoſtles have appointed or approved: and the Chriſtian prieſthood being in all Chriſtian nations owned and eſtabliſhed by the public, they have the commiſſion and authority of the magiſtrate for the edification of the people.

The power of correction is proper to be preſerved in the hand of the magiſtrate, and is never better applied than for the puniſhment of wickedneſs and vice, and for the maintenance of true religion and virtue.

As theſe methods are neceſſary for the promoting and preſerving the virtue of nations, and eſtabliſhing public happineſs and tranquillity, which ſo much depend on it; ſo are they likewiſe for the good government and improvement of private families: and every father, by natural right, has power to inſtruct, and within proper reſtraints to uſe correction, for the good and benefit of thoſe under his care.

As to inſtruction, conſidered ſeparate from correction, he muſt be a great friend to libertiniſm who has any thing to object againſt it. Some have thought, that ſince God has given all men reaſon to direct them, all men ſhould be left to their reaſon to diſcover the general truths of religion and morality, without having any principles or notions inſtilled into them by others; which they eſteem as ſo many prejudices only. But, not to inſiſt how contrary this is to all the rules and precepts of Scripture relating to the duty of fathers and mothers, and to the practice of all nations, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that had God intended that all men ſhould be left to the diſcoveries of their own reaſon in matters of duties, it had been neceſſary for him to have ſupplied all men with leiſure for ſpeculation, as well as with reaſon: for experience ſhews that the generality of men, in the preſent ſtate of things, are not able, for want of leiſure and educa-

tion, to be their own maſters: ſo far from it, that, in conjunction with all the helps that are at preſent afforded them, great numbers continue ignorant to a degree hardly to be imagined; and were theſe helps to be removed, we could expect nothing in the room of them but the groſſeſt ignorance and ſuperſtition.

If men have ſo much reaſon as to be able to diſcover their duty without aſſiſtance, as thoſe who would deliver them from the bondage of inſtruction ſuppoſe them to have, it is certain they have reaſon enough to diſtinguiſh between truth and falſehood, when propoſed to them by others, and are not therefore in more danger of being betrayed in acting contrary to their reaſon by inſtruction, than by being left to themſelves: and as for thoſe who have not reaſon enough to enable them to direct themſelves, or to make them capable of receiving inſtructions from others, they are fit only to be governed by other methods.

It is very certain that general errors have been perpetuated by traditionary inſtruction, as well as general truths: but if for this reaſon an end muſt be put to all inſtruction, what one thing of uſe can be preſerved in life, if we will be ſo fair as to carry the argument to its full extent? Many die daily by eating and drinking: what then? Muſt the world be ſtarved, becauſe you can tell us of ſome who have ſuffered by intemperance? or is there a greater reaſon to leave the world in ignorance, becauſe ſome through falſe teachers have been miſerably deceived?

But the ſtrongeſt objections lie againſt the uſe of

correction in matters of religion. All are ſo ſenſible of the neceſſity of puniſhments to preſerve the peace and order of the world, and to protect the innocent againſt the violence of ſinners, that the magiſtrate is allowed on all hands a right to puniſh all crimes which are prejudicial to the public, or to the intereſt of private men. A conceſſion this not to be deſpiſed in behalf of religion; for our duty to God does ſo concur in all things with our duty to our neighbour, that he who puniſhes offences and injuries offered to men, will undoubtedly ſo far puniſh vice and immorality. And this conceſſion being made, the plea for excluding the magiſtrate from matters of religion can only affect ſuch caſes where the honour of God alone is concerned; for all offences againſt men are allowed to be puniſhed. There remain only then the offences againſt God to be exempted from the terrors of this world; ſuch as profaneneſs, impiety, and the like; upon which they think there ought to be no reſtraint from the magiſtrate.

The great reaſon aſſigned for all this is, that puniſhments inflicted by the temporal power cannot make men religious; they can only conſtrain men to a compliance with the law in their outward behaviour, but cannot reach to the purifying their hearts and conſciences, in the clearneſs and integrity of which the virtue of religion does conſiſt.

But it ought, in the firſt place, to be conſidered, that ſuch impiety is truly prejudicial to the public, as it tends, by the contagion of ill example, to corrupt the members of the commonwealth. The reverence men have for God, is the very beſt founda-

tion of obedience to temporal governors: this makes them willing to diſcharge their duty faithfully to the public, and to private men. Take away this reverence and regard for God, and few will ſee any reaſon to obey the laws of man any farther than is neceſſary to their own ſecurity. But what an alteration would it make in a government, were the ſubjects, inſtead of being willing to obey, to lay hold on all opportunities of offending with impunity? No vigilance of the magiſtrate could be ſufficient to reſtrain the iniquity of multitudes inclined to do evil. Whoever therefore makes way for this corruption of manners, ſo prejudicial to the welfare and happineſs of mankind, is liable to puniſhment even as an enemy to the ſtate; and the conceſſion made the magiſtrate to puniſh offences againſt the public, will entitle him to inflict vengeance upon thoſe who openly affront the majeſty of God, either by denying his being, or his government of the world.

But, ſecondly, it is want of the knowledge of human nature, which leads men to make this objection: for though it is very true, that the ſinner, who abſtains from vice or immorality merely out of the fear of temporal puniſhment, cannot be ſaid to act upon a religious principle in ſo doing, or to render an acceptable ſervice to God; yet we muſt conſider not only the immediate influence which puniſhments have, but the conſequence which they are naturally apt to produce. If you keep a ſinner from vice through fear at firſt, it will by degrees grow habitual to him to do well; his reliſh for vice will abate, and by the length of practice he will come to take

pleaſure in virtue, how uneaſy ſoever it might ſit upon him at firſt; and whenever this change is effected, the man is truly religious: for what is a religious diſpoſition, unleſs this, to take pleaſure in doing well? This happy change often proceeds from leſs happy beginnings. We ſee in children every day, that their propenſity to ſome vices is by degrees wholly removed by the watchful eye and hand of a good parent; and we may obſerve the ſame effect in men from like cauſes. And will you ſay, that when a man is grown to be habitually virtuous, that he has no true religion in him, becauſe he was at firſt reclaimed from vice by temporal fears? If not, you muſt allow that theſe fears are not deſtructive of religion.

But I have ſaid enough to ſhew, and alſo to juſtify the means neceſſary to be uſed in diſcharging the duty recommended in the text. And I ſhall apply myſelf, in what remains, to exhort every man to do his part, and to make all, as far as his influence reaches, *keep the way of the Lord, and do juſtice and judgment.*

The magiſtrate is, in the firſt place, concerned to be watchful over the manners of the people, and to be jealous for the honour of God. In this conſiſts the ſtability of nations; for, *Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation, but ſin is the reproach of the people.* This caſe deſcends from the ſupreme head of juſtice to every officer of the kingdom, in proportion to the power communicated to him; and every magiſtrate, who connives at open impiety, is falſe both to God and the king. But I ſhall preſs this part of the exhortation no farther, which may perhaps concern but

very few in this place. But give me leave to add under this head, that private men, who are veſted with no part of the public authority, are capable of doing great ſervice even by ſhewing themſelves pleaſed that others ſhould do their duty. It is a great diſcouragement to magiſtrates, when they have not only the violence of ſinners to contend with, but alſo the reſentments and indignation of the innocent. A conſideration that ought to be maturely weighed, in an age that is not, I am ſure, too good to ſtand in need of reformation.

Next to the magiſtrate, the chief care of virtue and religion lies upon fathers and maſters of families. The kingdom is one great family, and it is made up of the ſmall ones; and if due care be taken in private families for the government and inſtruction of youth, the public will ſoon ſee and feel the happy effects of it. Permit me therefore to remind all parents of the duty they owe to God, their country, and their children, to take care that thoſe, who are by the laws of God and man committed to their government, be virtuouſly educated, and inſtructed in the way of the Lord. This God requires of you; his creatures they are, whom you call your children: they owe obedience to him in the firſt place, and it is his authority which you exerciſe over them; and if they periſh for want of timely inſtruction and correction, he will require their ſouls at your hands.

Parents have a truſt likewiſe repoſed in them by their country. There is nothing of greater conſequence to the public, than that the youth of the nation ſhould be trained up to virtue and induſtry;

that the ſeeds of religion ſhould be ſown betimes in their hearts, and cheriſhed by proper encouragement. Theſe are the only methods from which we can have any hopes to ſee our country ſupplied with honeſt and worthy men. It is but reaſonable to expect from parents, that they ſhould out of natural affection ſeek to promote the happineſs of their children; and ſince the ſame care, which is neceſſary to form them to be good ſubjects, is alſo neceſſary to lay the foundation of their own happineſs and proſperity in the world, this care is wholly entruſted to parents; who ought to look upon themſelves as reſponſible to their country for the future behaviour of their children.

But farther: if parents would but conſider the condition of thoſe children whom they have brought into the world, they would find themſelves obliged, by the ſtrongeſt ties of natural affection, to guard them againſt the certain miſeries of this life, and of the next, by ſeaſoning their minds with principles of virtue and religion. How wretched, do you think, are thoſe parents, who live to ſee their children made miſerable by vice? And what an addition muſt it be to their misfortune, if it is attended with this reflection, that it was want of early care in them, which led the way to this ruin and miſery? How often is it, that men remember with deteſtation the negligence and indulgence of their parents, when either they find themſelves uſeleſs to the world and themſelves, for want of that early care which ſhould have been beſtowed on them; or expoſed to miſery, to an untimely end, or to a life of ſhame and reproach, by thoſe evil inclinations, which grew

headſtrong in them for want of being pruned in their tender years!

You ſee then what ſtrong obligations parents are under to be diligent in the diſcharge of this duty; which they owe to God, their country, and their children: and we might promiſe ourſelves happy days to come, were there a performance anſwerable to theſe obligations. In many caſes indeed parents are diſabled from diſcharging this duty, through ignorance and poverty; and what muſt become of ſuch families, where the fathers and mothers can ſcarcely, with all their labour, provide food and raiment; ſo far are they from being able to attend to the education and inſtruction of their children? And this neceſſity of many poor families among us gave riſe to the inſtitution of public ſchools, maintained by contributions for the inſtruction and education of the poor: an inſtitution which, however ſerviceable to the poor of our country, is calculated to promote nobler views than thoſe of private intereſt and advantage to any one ſet of men, and tends directly to the public good, and the benefit of all.

The paſſions of men conſidered, it is not to be expected, that thoſe who are permitted to go wild and untamed in their youth, ſhould prove harmleſs, much leſs uſeful and beneficial to ſociety, in their more advanced years. Neceſſity is a great temptation to wickedneſs, and leads men to uſe fraud or violence to ſupport their vices; and if they have nothing but their corrupt affections to direct them, can it be hoped that they ſhould withſtand theſe temptations? Idle and undiſciplined boys commonly prove looſe and vicious young men, and often

fall a ſacrifice to the ſeverity of the law before they become old ones. Thieves and robbers muſt be puniſhed, or the innocent muſt be ruined; ſo far the rigor of the law is juſtified: but is it not a deplorable caſe, and to a Chriſtian country a great reproach, that great care ſhould be taken to puniſh wickedneſs, and little or none to prevent it? And yet this is the caſe where the inſtruction of the poor is neglected, and they are left to purſue the corrupt inclinations of nature to their own deſtruction. This miſchief is in ſome meaſure provided for by the charity-ſchools; and by breeding up the poor to be honeſt and diligent, the rich are ſaved from the violence of wicked neceſſitous men; the poor are reſcued from wickedneſs, and the puniſhments due to it; and ſo many uſeful and beneficial hands are gained to the public.

Farther, not only the good order and peace of civil ſociety is provided for by theſe charitable inſtitutions, but alſo the peace of the church of Chriſt; by training up youth to be orderly and well behaved members of it: an end which every Chriſtian, who has any regard for his holy profeſſion, muſt take pleaſure in promoting. But carry this conſideration into its remoter conſequences, the happineſs to which many ſouls may arrive through the influence which a pious education may have upon the whole courſe of their lives; and nothing will be wanting to give us a juſt conception of the uſefulneſs of this deſign, or to encourage us to be liberal and generous in contributing to the ſupport of it. If every gift beſtowed for the honour of God, or for the good of our country, or for the ſake of a poor bro-

ther, ſhall have its reward; how abundantly ſhall this charity be recompenſed, which ſerves all theſe purpoſes at once; which brings maintenance to the poor, inſtruction to the ignorant, and opens to the miſerable a way to happineſs; which provides for the order of civil government, and the peace of Chriſt's church on earth; referring all to the glory and honour of him, who is Lord of the world which now is, and of that which is to come? Give therefore according as God has bleſſed you: here are many who aſk your help; the poor, your country, the church of Chriſt, which intreats for theſe her helpleſs children: and one there is who looks on, and will not forget the love you ſhew to the meaneſt of his members for his ſake, Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord: *to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed all honour and glory, henceforth, and for evermore.* Amen.

DISCOURSES

PREACHED ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

TO

THE READER.

THESE Sermons, preached on important occaſions, were ſeparately publiſhed by their excellent author, the late Biſhop of London, DR. THOMAS SHERLOCK.

The judicious reader will diſcover in them the ſame energy of ſentiment and purity of diction, the ſame pious intention to promote virtue and true religion, the ſame pathetic and convincing addreſs to the heart, which ſo eminently diſtinguiſh the reſt of this Prelate's Diſcourſes.

DR. SHERLOCK no ſooner appeared in the great world, than he gave evident proofs of the extent of his learning and the ſuperiority of his genius. It has been matter of doubt with ſome good judges of ſtyle, whether the

firſt of theſe Sermons, which he preached above ſeventy years ſince, when a young man, has been excelled, either in language or matter, by any that he delivered from the pulpit afterwards.

There is not, perhaps, a more difficult taſk, than the doing juſtice to a great and exalted character. We ſhall not, therefore, preſume to draw a portrait of BISHOP SHERLOCK; but will juſt obſerve, that his views, both in civil and religious matters, were always large and comprehenſive, not confined to the narrow ſyſtems of particular parties, nor ſubjected to the fluctuating principles of powerful and intereſted men: that he was a moſt ſtrenuous and able defender of the great truths of our holy religion: that he made it his conſtant practice to inculcate the chriſtian and ſocial virtues; to enforce a due and ready ſubmiſſion to the laws; to inſpire prince and people with a ſenſe of their reſpective duties, and to diſcountenance all temporary changes and haſty innovations in Church and State.

The re-publication of theſe Diſcourſes has

been ſo long and earneſtly wiſhed for, that we cannot doubt of their acceptance with the Public, as the *Fifth* and laſt Volume of BISHOP SHERLOCK's Sermons.

1775. *D. D.*

DISCOURSE I.

PROV. xxiv. 21.

My ſon, fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change

THE fear of God, and of the king, are joined together in Scripture, to ſhew the dependence one has upon the other. The only laſting foundation of civil obedience, is the fear of God; and the trueſt intereſt of princes, is to maintain the honour of religion, by which they ſecure their own. The advantage of religion to all public ſocieties and civil governments is ſo plain and viſible, that ſome have ſuſpected it to be the only end of religion; which they allow to be an excellent contrivance of ſtate, a proper remedy for the turbulent humours and paſſions of men. And though we acknowledge nobler and better ends of religion, which reſpect another world; yet we muſt, with thankfulneſs to its divine Author, own it to be excellently adapted to the temporal felicity of private men, and public ſocieties; *Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation, but ſin is the reproach of any people.*

If we look into the hiſtory of former times, we

ſhall find the firſt ſymptoms of ruin and deſtruction have appeared in the diſſolute lives of the people, and a general contempt of ſacred things. Irreligion naturally tends to diſorder and confuſion; for all civil and moral duties are founded in the principles of religion; which once overthrown, nothing remains but pure force and power to reſtrain the unruly appetites of men: a way of governing neither ſafe to the prince, nor eaſy to the people; and therefore can never laſt long. Duties, which flow from fixed and ſettled principles, muſt always be the ſame; the obligation ariſing from them unalterable; from the practice of which will follow order and regularity. But intereſt and paſſion are in continual motion, and liable to infinite changes; and men who ſteer by them, can hold no ſteady courſe of action, but muſt be *given to change*, as often as they are out of humour, or think the preſent ſtate of things not proper to ſerve their turn. Therefore nothing but a religious ſenſe of our duty to God, and to our governors, his miniſters on earth, can keep us conſtant and upright in our obedience. *Fear God and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change.*

I ſhall not conſider the duty of fearing God, any farther than as the obedience due to our ſuperiors on earth is included in it; and ſhall therefore confine myſelf to the following particulars; To conſider,

Firſt, What obedience to our governors is enjoined by the law of God.

Secondly, How inconſiſtent with this obedience the practice of thoſe men is, who *are given to change.*

Firſt, What obedience to our governors is enjoined by the law of God.

Obedience is ſeen chiefly in three things:

1ſt, In ſubmiſſion to the laws and commands of our princes.

2dly, In honour and reverence to their perſons and government.

3dly, In defending them, when any danger threatens them or the public.

The firſt and principal inſtance of obedience, is ſubmiſſion to the laws and commands of our princes. To determine the original of civil power, or how the prince's right to the obedience of the ſubject firſt began, is neither eaſy, nor at this time neceſſary. But whatever the original of government has been, or upon what account ſoever lawful authority has been gained; upon the ſame, obedience becomes due. At the time our Saviour appeared in the world, various were the forms of government in it, and different the degrees of power that were exerciſed by rulers over different countries; none of which were either leſſened or increaſed by the divine law, but all pronounced to be the ordinance of God; and obedience to all exacted under the penalty of diſobeying God, the original of all power and authority. *For he that reſiſteth, reſiſteth the ordinance of God; and they that reſiſt, ſhall receive to themſelves damnation.*

But ſince the nature of obedience is no where determined by the law of God, but only the practice of it commanded; ſome other rule there muſt be, to judge of the extent of our duty. As in moral virtues, the light of nature and right reaſon inform

us what is temperance, ſobriety, and the like; and therefore theſe virtues are commanded in Scripture, and, in moſt caſes, men left to their natural notions of good and evil, to diſtinguiſh between the virtue and the vice; ſo likewiſe muſt the acts of obedience, which the law of God commands, be explained and defined by ſome other rule. When the Jews put that captious queſtion to our Saviour, *Whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæſar, or no*; he gave no new directions, but judged them out of their own mouths by the known rules of government: for they having owned the coin of the country to bear Cæſar's image and ſuperſcription, a manifeſt token of *their* ſubjection and *his* ſovereignty; he determined, *Render therefore unto Cæſar the things which are Cæſar's.* Agreeable to which is the Apoſtle's rule, *Tribute to whom tribute is due.* Our Saviour took it not upon him to determine the civil right of Cæſar; but the right appearing, obedience and compliance he commanded. The rights of princes are not determined in Scripture; and therefore in queſtions of right, the Scripture is no rule.

The meaſure then of power and authority muſt be the rule of obedience: whatever the prince can lawfully command, the ſubject is bound to obey. The *things which are God's muſt be rendered unto God*; and therefore no divine law, declared either by the clear light of nature, or expreſs revelation, can be ſuperſeded by the command of any earthly power. Which, whenever it is the caſe, we muſt obey God rather than man; and be content with the lot of them who ſuffer for well-doing. To reaſon abſtractedly upon the power of princes, is a ſign

of weakneſs, as well as of a troubleſome temper. Cuſtom, and the law of the land in each country, are in this caſe the higheſt reaſon; under which regulations, the power of all princes is lawful and reaſonable. Were it otherwiſe, the Goſpel, which was intended for the law of all nations and people, could not have commanded obedience to the preſent powers, which were in form and authority vaſtly different.

All obedience is primarily owing to God, the fountain of all power: and ſhould it pleaſe him to take upon himſelf the perſonal government of nations, as he did ſometime of the people of the Jews, all other power would ceaſe of courſe. In the Jewiſh government, the laws of civil and eccleſiaſtical polity were divine; being eſtabliſhed by God, when he took upon himſelf the external government of that people. But where God did not ſo viſibly intereſt himſelf, but committed the reins of government to earthly princes; the making laws for the external and viſible order of the world was remitted to their authority. And therefore the Goſpel, though infinitely more perfect than the law, gave us no ſyſtem of laws, either for civil or eccleſiaſtical government: which under the law were ordained by God, (not as ſupreme Governor of the world, but as the immediate and viſible Governor of the Jews;) but under the Goſpel are left to princes, who are appointed by God to be the viſible governors of the world; and therefore all viſible and external order is their proper care and buſineſs. Of *obedience* there are two parts; the external, and internal. The external conſiſts in the outward conformity of our ac-

tions to the rules and principles of virtue; the internal, in the ſincerity and purity of the heart. The government of the world is not concerned in the internal part; for if men act as if they were honeſt, the peace and outward order of the world will be ſecured, though their hearts are perverſe; and therefore, the judgment of this, God, as he alone is able for it, has reſerved to himſelf. The external part of *obedience* is that, in the due performance of which the beauty and order of the world conſiſts; and therefore this is the proper care of the governors of the world. The ſame holds in religion, which is the ſervice of God: there are duties which none are concerned in, but God and our own ſouls; ſuch as faith, repentance, and the like; the virtue of which is internal, of the heart. But God requires likewiſe an external and viſible worſhip from us, in which outward order and decency are *required*, but not *determined*, and therefore muſt be left to their juriſdiction, to whom we are anſwerable for our outward behaviour in all things. How far miſtaken then is the zeal of thoſe, who decline ſubmitting to the orders of the church, becauſe they are of human appointment! Whereas being ordained by a lawful power, they have ſo far the ſtamp of divine authority, as to make diſobedience to them a ſin againſt God.

The ſecond inſtance of obedience, is to honour and reverence our governors; to think with reſpect, and ſpeak with decency of their perſons and governments. This duty we owe to all our ſuperiors, in proportion to their dignity and office. If we look up to the fountain and original of all

power, the ſupreme Governor of the world; his *name*, even *to mention in vain, ſhall not be held guiltleſs*. Next to him, though the diſtance be great, are the ſupreme powers on earth; to whom we owe the greateſt *civil* reſpect and reverence; according to the Apoſtle's rule, *to render honour, to whom honour*; *fear, to whom fear* is due: whoſe names or perſons to treat with contempt, is want of decency, as well as duty. Two things have a right to honour and reſpect; perſonal virtues, and public characters; which when happily joined together, are to be accounted *worthy of double honour*: but when ſeparate, are not to be defrauded of their due portion. When St. Paul, provoked by the unjuſt uſage of the high-prieſt, returned him a rude anſwer; being informed what place he held in the commonwealth, he corrected, and excuſed his error; *I wiſt not, brethren, that he was the high-prieſt: for it is written, Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the ruler of thy people.*

The third inſtance of obedience, is in defending the perſons and government of our princes.

Mutual defence is the end of all government. Protection in life and fortune is the right of every ſubject: which, as he may lawfully expect from his prince; ſo is he bound to him, in the like duty of defending his perſon and government, whenever occaſion requires. When men entered into civil ſociety, they reſigned all their private right and intereſt, even in their own lives, to the public good: and therefore the public happineſs is to be preferred before our own; the life of the public, which conſiſts in maintaining the eſtabliſhed form of govern-

ment, to be ſupported, though with the loſs of our own. The prince bears the perſon of the commonwealth; by him the public lives and acts; therefore is his life ſacred: which *but* coldly to defend is want of affection to the public, and treaſon againſt the original laws of all government. And if the ſenſe of honour be not mightily changed, to die for our prince or our country, is to fall with glory, and challenges reſpect to our memory from all poſterity.

To maintain the eſtabliſhed form of government, is the firſt and higheſt duty of men acting in ſociety. To remove the ancient land-marks of power and obedience, tends to the utter ruin and deſtruction of all government; and is an injury to the prince, as well as diſobedience to his power; who acquires a perſonal right and intereſt in the privileges deſcending with the crown. But this will more properly fall under the ſecond head; which was to conſider,

How inconſiſtent with obedience required, the practice of thoſe men is, *who are given to change.*

No government was ever ſo perfectly formed at firſt, as to anſwer all occaſions; the wiſdom of man not reaching far enough to view all the poſſible variety of circumſtances, that may require the mitigating, or increaſing the ſeverity of old laws; or the making new. Therefore it is neceſſary for the public good, that there ſhould be a power lodged ſomewhere, to adapt old laws to the preſent circumſtances, or thoſe which may hereafter ariſe. Thus to change, is an act of lawful power; and therefore falls not within the charge of the text, *Not to meddle with them that are given to change.*

But then the moſt beneficial and neceſſary changes muſt be begun, promoted, and perfected by lawful authority; or elſe they loſe their good quality, and, like wholeſome remedies unduly applied, prey upon the vitals of the government. For no change can be ſo beneficial in its conſequence, as uſurping upon lawful authority is deſtructive; and therefore it becomes a good ſubject to bear any inconvenience ariſing from the preſent conſtitution, rather than, by too precipitately throwing it off, to prevent the regular methods of alteration. To pretend public good, is common to all factions and parties; and therefore can excuſe none: and where the pretence is real; yet to ſeek public good, in oppoſition to public authority, is like curing diſtempers by deſtroying the patient.

To view with pleaſure the factions and diſturbances of a kingdom; and, like the lame and impotent at the pool of Bethesda, to long for the troubling of the waters, that we may firſt ſtep in, and make ſome private advantage of the public calamities, is neither the part of a good man, or a good Chriſtian.

To encourage the ſeditious principles and practices of others; though cunning men may do it without danger, yet they can never do it without guilt.

Theſe practices need not be brought near, to be compared with the duty of obedience. They appear at firſt ſight to have nothing leſs in them than honour and reverence, or obedience to the prince.

The authority of the prince is as much concerned in maintaining the honour and order of God's ſer-

vice, as of his own: and the nobleſt character that belongs to princes, is, that of *nurſing fathers and mothers* to the church of Chriſt; the peace and order of which is at once the ſplendour and ſecurity of a government: and therefore the advice of the text, *Not to meddle with them who are given to change*, muſt be extended to the government of the church, as well as of the ſtate. And the occaſion of this ſolemnity gives but too much reaſon for this application; the alterations intended and practiſed upon the church, influencing not a little in the barbarous treaſon which we this day lament.

There muſt in the church, as in the ſtate, be a power to change whatever, through uſe and experience, appears unfit for the end it was deſigned. To propoſe and procure amendments to the laws of the church, when there is occaſion for it, is their duty in whoſe hands the power is lodged; and changes ſo effected, can never be to the blemiſh or diſhonour of the church. But when men diſlike without reaſon, and obſtinately condemn whatever has been ſettled by authority; when they diſclaim the power and all the acts of the church; either their ignorance muſt be invincible, or their guilt unpardonable.

The reaſon of all changes ought to be very plain and apparent; leſt lightneſs and wantonneſs, in altering old laws, bring power and authority into contempt. To change is the effect, and the ſign of weakneſs: and therefore it is the character of the moſt perfect Being, that in him is no *variableneſs, or ſhadow of turning*. *Often* to change, will *always* breed contempt: and therefore, in private life, wiſe

men chooſe rather to bear ſome inconveniencies ariſing from the way they are ſettled in, than, by ſhifting from one courſe to another, to gain little but the character of unſteadineſs, and want of reſolution. Much leſs ſhould public bodies hazard their credit by unneceſſary changes; and, for the ſake of removing one unpoliſhed ſtone, endanger the whole building; which how it will ſettle on a new foundation, the wiſdom of man cannot foreſee. Some inconveniencies in the eſtabliſhment of public ſocieties, like ſome diſtempers in the body, are borne with leſs danger than they are cured.

To plead for alterations of ſeemingly greater purity and perfection, carries with it ſuch an appearance of goodneſs and concern for the ſervice of God, as will never fail to engage the favour of the multitude, who always make up in zeal what they want in knowledge; which is, and will be a temptation to men, who are incapable of a better, to take this way to raiſe themſelves in the eſteem of the people.

To preſs for alterations when moſt things in the preſent eſtabliſhment are owned to be good, and all tolerable, is not the effect of much judgment. If want of perfection be a reaſon to change, it will be a reaſon for ever; for ſince all the laws of the church are not of divine inſtitution, they have too great a mixture of weakneſs in their original, ever to be perfect in themſelves. And ſhould all the changes deſired be granted, let not men imagine that the next age will be ſo unlike this, as not to find fault with the orders of their ſuperiors.

It is unaccountable in reaſon, that, in matters of

religious government, every man thinks himſelf judge of what is decent and convenient, and what fit to be obeyed; whereas in matters of civil government, whatever they act, they dare not pretend to the ſame diſcretionary power: as if the caſe were not the ſame in both; and obedience in all things lawful and honeſt, (further than which, no man's private judgment extends,) in both of like neceſſity.

How the common people are led into the eſteem of men thus acting, is not hard to ſay. To ſuffer for one's opinion, right or wrong, is in the eyes of the vulgar meritorious: and ſince ſome outward advantages are forfeited, by not complying with the preſent eſtabliſhment; ſhould men, even for worldly intereſt, and want of merit ſufficient to riſe in the lawful and regular way, ſtrike out new paths for themſelves; yet they ſhall be ſure, among their followers, to have the character of honeſt men, men ſuffering for conſcience ſake. And though there be no ſuffering in the caſe; no puniſhment attending upon ſuch practices; yet whilſt rewards are open to the obedience of others, the partiality of men will make them apter to repine at the diſtinction, than to be thankful for the impunity.

As long as men are weak enough to be miſled; and the errors of ſome are profitable to others; there will be no end of diſſenſions: and ſhould the reſtleſſneſs and importunity of men once break in upon the conſtitution, the event could only ſhew where it would end.

To what extremes the humour of men once ſet on changing will run, the mournful occaſion of this

day's meeting is too ſenſible a proof. The actors in the late troubles thought of nothing leſs, when they began, than the event that ſucceeded. The good of the public, and of the King, was the pretence; and they never left ſeeking it, till they had ruined the public, and laid his royal head low. With the ſame good ſucceſs, the purity of the church was promoted; which ended in utter ſubverſion, and the blood of a great prelate.

Great indeed in many reſpects; but he ſunk under the iniquity of the times, by endeavouring to give life to the long-forgotten and neglected diſcipline of the church; when the liberty and licentiouſneſs of the age could bear nothing leſs. The Reformation had given ſuch a turn to weak heads, that had not weight enough to poiſe themſelves between the extremes of popery and fanaticiſm; that every thing older than yeſterday was looked upon to be popiſh and antichriſtian: the meaneſt of the people aſpired to the prieſthood, and were readier to frame new laws for the church, than obey the old. This led him to ſome acts of great ſeverity, that he might create an authority and reverence for the laws, when it ſhould appear they had not quite loſt their edge. Thus he became too generally hated, and fall he muſt; for his faults were great, and, as the times went, unpardonable; he loved the Church and the King.

His caſe might deſerve more to be lamented, did not that which followed bury all private injuries and reſentments; in reſpect of which, the former *cruelties were tender mercies*. The thirſt of blood was too great to be ſatisfied with the fall of private

men; nor could the new ſchemes of confuſion take place, till the fountain of lawful power and authority was dried up. Every man had a project of his own for a new government; and rather than be disappointed, they reſolved to lay the foundation in royal blood.

Could all the obligations of nature and religion have prevailed, the King might have lived to make his people happy; but the misfortune was, they had injured him too much to truſt him even with his own life; nor could their conſciences give them ſecurity for the miſchiefs already done, but in going on ſtill to add murder and parricide, and in deſtroying the power they had too much reaſon to fear. A barbarous cruelty! of which it is hard to ſay, whether the malice and wickedneſs, with which it was acted, were greater; or the patience and magnanimity with which it was borne. As if the conteſt had been, whether human nature were capable of greater degrees of virtue, or vice.

View the King from the throne to the ſcaffold; and he was in his life the pattern of a good prince; in his death, of a good Chriſtian. He was a prince, who, from the ſweetneſs of his temper, the integrity of his intentions, and a kind and tender concern for the meaneſt of his ſubjects, might well have expected to make his name dear to this nation, and his memory glorious, upon a better account than the hiſtory of this day affords. He was formed by nature and grace to be an ornament of better times; and wanted nothing to make him great in the worſt, thoſe he lived in, but a juſt reſentment of the indignities he ſuffered. The only prerogative his

enemies had left him, was to forgive the injuries they did him; which he exerciſed to the laſt; and, in the heat of a mercileſs rebellion, could never forget his enemies were his ſubjects, when they had long ſince forgot him to be their King; which was too great a bias upon the minds of indifferent men, when they ſaw the only way to eſcape being puniſhed, was to take the courſe that deſerved it.

They, who conſider the happy and envied condition of our government, in which are equally ſecured, the dignity of the prince, and liberty of the ſubject; the bleſſing of a church eſtabliſhed in primitive purity, wherein the honour of religion and God's ſervice is maintained without ſuperſtition; obedience taught without blindneſs; can never ſufficiently reverence the memory of a prince, who choſe rather to lay down his crown and his life, than not deliver down theſe bleſſings inviolable to poſterity. They, who remember him, without any partial affection, muſt allow him the character of a noble and generous prince, and father of his country. They, who think with envy, and ſpeak with malice, of him, can ſay no worſe, than, *He was a man of like paſſions with us.* And ſurely they forget themſelves to be men, who would have our common infirmities remembered to his diſhonour.

The caſe is hard, if princes have no right to the allowances made to all beſides: harder, becauſe, by their high ſtation, they are more expoſed to the view of the world; and few there are ſo modeſt, as not to think themſelves wiſe enough to judge of their actions. Private perſons have their inclinations free from all checks and reſtraints, more than

innocence and religion require: their rule is, to preſerve integrity, and it will preſerve them. But men of character have this further care, *that their good be not evil ſpoken of:* a leſſon of infinitely more difficulty, and greater toil, by how much harder it is to pleaſe men than God. To ſeek the good opinion of the people, is prudence in men of public characters: but is there a greater ſlavery under the ſun, than to be obliged to live by the opinion of thoſe, who are neither wiſe enough to judge, nor to let it alone?

The privilege that extends to the meaneſt cottage, to chooſe their own friends and companions, is not without murmuring allowed to kings: nor will it be permitted to the dignity of ſome characters, and majeſty of others, to ſtoop even to the innocent and harmleſs enjoyments of life: as if princes and great miniſters had no private cares; but were capable of the conſtant thoughts of public buſineſs and religion. Every ſtep men take, by which they riſe into the view of the world, is an abridgement of their innocent liberty, and binds them to a ſtricter and ſeverer ſelf-denial. For there is a natural envy in men, which loves to ſee the honour and dignity of great places qualified with trouble and anxiety.

But men who are diſtinguiſhed by the advantages of birth and education, ſhould be above the common prejudices and ſordid paſſions of the vulgar; and think themſelves obliged, in honour as well as duty, to pay a ſteady and regular obedience to the government. It is ſome excuſe for the diſhonour of the nation, in the late rebellion, that we

can ſhew ſo brave a liſt of nobility and gentry, who fell in defence of their King; and left the honour of their death, a nobler inheritance to their families than their lands and eſtates. The imitation of their virtue and obedience need not to be preſſed in this audience; where the rules of duty and honour are better practiſed, than they can be taught. The noble families have examples of their own, to inſtruct them how they ſhould behave themſelves to their prince and their country: and in the hiſtory of their anceſtors, may learn, that *loyalty to the crown* is the firſt and the nobleſt title of honour. And ſurely thus much good we may expect from the evil of the late times; that men would learn at length to value the bleſſing of a good prince.

It is the goodneſs of God to us, that, after ſo many convulſions, we ſtill enjoy our ancient government; that there is ſtill life and vigour in the religion and liberty of England: a goodneſs that on our part requires the utmoſt returns of gratitude; which can no way be ſo acceptably ſhewn, as in the worthy uſe of the bleſſings we enjoy. We ſhall but ill perform the duty of this day, unleſs we amend in ourſelves the errors we reprove in others. The crown and the virtues of the royal Martyr are once more joined together; let not then our reproach be renewed by the repeated want of obedience and affection. If, whilſt our governors watch with care and ſolicitude, to make us eaſy and happy in ourſelves; ſtrong and ſecure againſt our enemies abroad; we labour to diſturb the methods of our government at home; we muſt thank ourſelves for the evils, which will always follow from the turbu-

lent humours and diſtracted counſels of a nation. We have an enemy ſtrong and cunning to deal with; an ancient rival of the power and honour of England; an enemy to the religion of Proteſtants, and the liberty of mankind: and if nothing elſe will, yet intereſt would prevail with us to unite for our mutual ſafety; and whilſt our brave countrymen expoſe their lives to the hazard and fortune of war abroad, in defence of their prince and their country; methinks the leaſt that can be expected of us, is to be quiet and peaceable at home. To ſave the ſinking liberties of Europe is worthy a Queen of England; and if the ſpirit of our fathers be not degenerate in us, it will, it muſt riſe to check the progreſs of an ambitious monarch; and it will ever be the choice of an Engliſhman, rather to die by his ſword, than live by his law: but our lives and fortunes are ſafe in the conduct and prudence of our governors; we need only ſacrifice our ill humours to the peace and ſecurity of our country, and be content to *ſtand ſtill, and ſee the ſalvation of the Lord.* Let us at leaſt be willing to be ſaved; and, for the ſake and defence of our religion, ſubmit to live by the rules of it. We have been long fighting and contending for our religion; it is now high time to practiſe it; and a better foundation we cannot lay than in the duties of the text, *To fear the Lord, and the king, and not to meddle with them that are given to change.*

DISCOURSE II.

MATTHEW x. 41, 42.

He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, ſhall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, ſhall receive a righteous man's reward.

And whoſoever ſhall give to drink unto one of theſe little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a diſciple, verily I ſay unto you, he ſhall in no wiſe loſe his reward.

TOWARDS the beginning of this chapter we read, that our Saviour ſent forth his diſciples to preach the kingdom of God. That they might preach with authority, he endowed them with power from above, and with the manifold gifts of the Spirit. That they might attend upon their miniſtry without diſtraction, he eaſed them of the care of providing for themſelves, and gave them power to demand and receive of thoſe under their inſtruction whatever their wants required. *Provide*, ſays he, *neither gold, nor ſilver, nor braſs in your purſes; nor ſcrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither ſhoes, nor yet ſtaves; for the workman is worthy of*

his meat, ver. 9, 10. Or as St. Luke expreſſes it, *The labourer is worthy of his hire*, ch. x. 7. This reaſon ſhews the true ſenſe of the precept; that it was not meant to take from them the neceſſaries and conveniencies of life, or to make poverty a part of their profeſſion; but only to diſcharge them of the care and ſolicitude of providing for themſelves; for they had a right to be provided for by thoſe whom they ſerved in the Goſpel: *For the labourer is worthy of his hire.*

And this further appears to be the ſenſe of this precept in Luke xxii. 35. *And he ſaid unto them, When I ſent you without purſe, and ſcrip, and ſhoes, lacked ye any thing? And they ſaid, Nothing.* Had it been his intent to make poverty a neceſſary qualification for the miniſtry, he would not have aſked this queſtion, or received this anſwer. But ſo little did he intend it, that his care ſupplied the want of theirs throughout their journey, and enlarged the hearts of the people towards them: ſo that their poverty was turned into plenty; and they preached the Goſpel, without the incumbrance of worldly cares, *as having nothing, and yet poſſeſſing all things.*

As the office of preaching the Goſpel was to be perpetual in the Chriſtian church, ſo this right of maintenance was for ever to attend it; for the *Lord ordained*, as St. Paul tells us, *that they which preach the Goſpel ſhould live of the Goſpel*, 1 Cor. ix. 14. A right on one ſide infers a duty on the other: if the miniſters of the Goſpel have a right to be provided for, it is the duty of the faithful to provide for them; but the proportion of this maintenance being no where determined, but men left to give as their

circumſtances enable them, and as their love and honour for the miniſtry incline them; what is given upon this account comes to be conſidered as a charity freely offered, rather than as a debt duly diſcharged: and as ſuch, our Saviour has promiſed to accept and reward it. And ſince in this kind of charity the honour of his name, and the promoting his religion, are moſt immediately conſulted, he has diſtinguiſhed it from all others by a more honourable and glorious reward; *He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, ſhall receive a prophet's reward,* &c. Matth. x. 41.

To *receive a prophet,* ſometimes ſignifies to receive his doctrine, and to become his follower or diſciple; but in this place it cannot ſignify ſo, for theſe two reaſons:

Firſt, Our Saviour himſelf diſtinguiſhes this reception of a prophet from the other reception, which is obeying and hearkening to his voice, in the 14th verſe: *Whoſoever ſhall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that houſe or city, ſhake off the duſt of your feet.* Had the ſame thing been intended by *receiving* and *hearing* a prophet, the words would have been thus connected: Whoſoever ſhall not receive you, *and* hear your words; but the disjunctive particle *nor,* ſhews that they are here ſpoken of as different things. The 11th verſe, compared with this 14th, will determine what is meant in this place by receiving a prophet: *Into whatſoever city or town ye ſhall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence,* ver. 11. In the 14th it follows, *Whoſoever ſhall not receive you,* &c. that is, to *abide* with them; which abode implies, not

only houſe-room, but a ſupply of ſuch other neceſſaries as their circumſtances required; for it was to anſwer the want of gold and ſilver, and ſuch other things as they were expreſsly forbidden to provide for themſelves.

The ſecond reaſon may be collected from the laſt verſe of the text: *And whoſoever ſhall give to drink unto one of theſe little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a diſciple, verily I ſay unto you, he ſhall in no wiſe loſe his reward.* It is manifeſt that our Saviour here ſpeaks of giving a *cup of cold water only*, as the loweſt degree of that virtue which he was then recommending; for to ſhew how acceptable an offering it would be to God to receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, he adds, that even a cup of cold water given in the name of a diſciple, ſhould not loſe its reward. To receive a prophet, therefore, and to give a cup of cold water to a diſciple, are acts of the ſame kind, though differing in degree; and conſequently to receive a prophet in this place, is not an act of faith or obedience, but of charity and beneficence.

To receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, is to receive him becauſe he is a prophet; upon account of his character and office, and near relation which he bears to Chriſt. To be kind to our friends and relations, and to adminiſter relief to the extreme neceſſities and ſufferings of our fellow-creatures, is, in ſome degree, to comply with the cravings of nature in ourſelves, and to provide for our own eaſe and enjoyment: for the pity and compaſſion, which miſerable objects raiſe in us, are attended with a pain and uneaſineſs to ourſelves, no otherwiſe to be al-

layed, but by relieving the miſery that cauſed them. But when we relieve the members of Chriſt, becauſe of the relation they bear to him, we act then in the ſpirit of true Chriſtian charity; and ſhew ourſelves to be lively parts of his body; *rejoicing with them that do rejoice*, and ſuffering with thoſe who ſuffer.

The excellency of Chriſtian charity is derived from this dignity of its object. In morality we can riſe no higher than to conſider men as men, as partakers of the ſame common nature with ourſelves; and the natural ſenſe we have of miſery is the foundation of our tenderneſs and compaſſion towards others. In this caſe, the regard we have for others is derived from ourſelves; and our love and compaſſion bear a proportion to the relation that is between us and them: our children ſhare as largely in our affections, as they do in our blood: next to them, our relations and friends have the preference: and in all caſes, the love of ourſelves is the fountain from which our love to others is derived. But Chriſtian charity flows from another ſpring: here all the affections terminate in Chriſt; and we know no other relation but that which is derived from him, who is *head over the whole family*. And as the love of Chriſt is the ſource of Chriſtian charity, ſo is it the meaſure of it too; and the rule by which we muſt adjuſt our love and charity to others: he is our neareſt relation, who is neareſt related to Chriſt; and is therefore the moſt immediate object of our love and charity. *He that receiveth you*, ſays our bleſſed Lord to his Apoſtles, *receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that ſent*

me. Then follow immediately the words which I have now read to you for the ſubject of this diſcourſe.

In treating on which, I beg leave to obſerve to you,

Firſt, The ſeveral degrees of charity mentioned in them; and wherein the excellency of one above the other conſiſts.

Secondly, How truly Chriſtian, and excellent in its kind, that charity is, which is the end and deſign of this annual ſolemnity.

I. If we begin our account at the verſe immediately preceding the text, we ſhall find four degrees of charity enumerated, and diſtinguiſhed from each other by the ſeveral and diſtinct promiſes made to them. The firſt is, that of receiving an Apoſtle: *He that receiveth you, receiveth me.* The ſecond, that of receiving a prophet: *He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, ſhall receive a prophet's reward.* The third, that of receiving a righteous man: *He that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, ſhall receive a righteous man's reward.* The fourth, that of relieving the meaneſt of Chriſt's diſciples: *Whoſoever ſhall give to drink unto one of theſe little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a diſciple, verily I ſay unto you, he ſhall in no wiſe loſe his reward.*

Charity is diſtinguiſhed into theſe different kinds and degrees, by the dignity of the perſons who are the objects of it. For ſince receiving a prophet, ſhall entitle us to a prophet's reward; and receiving a righteous man, to a righteous man's reward; it is plain that receiving a prophet as far exceeds the

y of receiving a righteous man, as a prophet is excellent than he.

receive a prophet, becauſe he is our friend or on, is but a common degree of kindneſs; the ır muſt be paid him becauſe he is a prophet; ıſt be done in the name of a prophet: ſo that ıotive and principle upon whſch we act muſt ten into the account; and our good deeds will re their true and proper value, from the views egards with which they are done.

this lies the difference between the Chriſtian he moral virtue: the ſame object appears not e ſame light to both. Nature melts at the of miſery, and by a ſecret ſympathy feels what s; and relieves itſelf by adminiſtering comfort upport to the afflicted: but grace looks on the ings of Chriſt in all his members; and gives ıſſiſtance to the miſerable for his ſake, which e gives only for its own. For this reaſon we Chriſt charging himſelf with all the kindneſſes ıcts of mercy ſhewn to his brethren and diſci-

I *was an hungered*, ſays he, *and ye gave* ME ; I *was thirſty*, *and ye gave* ME *drink*; I *was a ger*, *and ye took* ME *in*; *naked*, *and ye clothed* ME; *s ſick*, *and ye viſited* ME ; I *was in priſon*, *and ye unto* ME. This regard to Chriſt is the very and ſoul of Chriſtian charity; and that only h can entitle our good works to reward at the lay: for our good works themſelves have nei- merit nor righteouſneſs, but as they begin and in Chriſt: the love of Chriſt is the fountain of ſtian charity; and Chriſt in his members is the ct of it.

This being the nature of Chriſtian charity, it is plain that one kind will differ from another in perfection, as it more nearly approaches the perſon of Chriſt, who is the object, and as it more ſtrongly partakes of the principle, which is the love of Chriſt. And by this rule of proportion, our Saviour has placed the ſeveral degrees of charity mentioned in the text; as will appear by conſidering the characters and relations of the perſons, who are the immediate objects.

The perſons mentioned are four ſorts: apoſtles; prophets; the righteous; and, the little ones. They are ranked according to the dignity of their characters, which ariſes from the relation they bear to Chriſt, who is head over all. And under one or other of theſe denominations, may every Chriſtian be found: ſo that we have here, in truth, a perfect ſcheme of Chriſtian charity, and a rule to direct us in the choice of proper objects.

The Apoſtles, upon the death of our Saviour, ſucceeded to the government and direction of the church: they were commiſſioned to feed and to rule the flock in his ſtead, and in his name. Under them were placed teachers and paſtors of different orders, who are comprehended under the general name of prophets.

Theſe offices have been perpetuated in the church by a conſtant ſucceſſion of men duly called to them; and the preſent governors and paſtors of it ſtand in the ſame degree of nearneſs and relation to Chriſt, that the Apoſtles and Prophets did, who went before them in the ſame work of the miniſtry; and we muſt *ſo account of them, as of the miniſters of*

Chriſt, and ſtewards of the myſteries of God, 1 Cor. iv. 1.

The two next characters belong to the flock of Chriſt; who are not diſtinguiſhed from each other by any difference in character or office, but only by their different attainments in faith; the righteous are the *ſtrong* in faith: the little ones are the *weak*. The righteous are thoſe, who, as the Apoſtle to the Epheſians expreſſes it, *are come unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt*. The little ones are thoſe he calls *children*; unſettled in the faith, and liable *to be toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine*, Eph. iv. 13, 14.

The learned Grotius reckons here but three degrees, (for he leaves out the Apoſtles, who yet are plainly mentioned in the 40th verſe,) and of them he ſays, that they are *tres diſcipulorum Chriſti gradus*. The righteous he makes to be a middle kind of Chriſtian, between the little ones and the perfect: and by prophets he underſtands only perfect Chriſtians, without regard to any peculiar office or character in the church belonging to them. But this is neither agreeable to the language of Scripture, nor to our Saviour's deſign in this place; the δίκαιοι, the *righteous*, are always ſpoken of as perfect Chriſtians: thoſe who are to ſhine forth in the kingdom like the ſun, are ſurely no mean or middle kind of Chriſtians; but they are called the *righteous*. So in the 25th of St. Matthew, thoſe who at the laſt day ſhall be entitled to eternal life, are the *righteous*. In the 12th of the Hebrews, the Apoſtle tells them they are come—*to the general aſſembly and church of*

the firſt-born, which are written in heaven; and to God the Judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, καὶ πνεύμασι δικαίων τετελειωμένων. Are the δίκαιοι, *righteous*, here ſpoken of as middle Chriſtians, where their diſtinguiſhing character is, that they are *made perfect?*

Nor is the word *prophet* ever uſed, where Chriſtians in general are ſpoken of; but it always denotes a peculiar character and office: *He gave*, ſays St. Paul to the Epheſians, *ſome, apoſtles; and ſome, prophets; and ſome, evangeliſts; and ſome, paſtors and teachers.* Where the offices are thus diſtinctly enumerated, prophet denotes a diſtinct order in the miniſtry; but when it is uſed generally, it denotes the paſtors and teachers of the church, without regard to their diſtinct orders: and in the text, prophets follow after apoſtles, in the ſame manner that little ones follow after the righteous: for as little ones include all degrees of Chriſtians under the righteous, ſo prophets include all degrees of paſtors under apoſtles.

Beſides, our Saviour's deſign in this place was evidently to lay a foundation for the ſupport of the Chriſtian miniſtry; he forbids them to provide for themſelves, for this reaſon, becauſe they were workmen worthy of their hire, and ought to be provided for by others: and to encourage men cheerfully to diſcharge this duty to them, he adds, *He that receiveth you, receiveth me.* And when this was his deſign and intention, could he forget all degrees of teachers, but apoſtles, and yet be ſo particular in reckoning up all degrees of Chriſtians? It was neceſſary to his purpoſe indeed, and to complete the

compariſon, to mention the ſeveral degrees of Chriſtian charity, that it might appear how highly he valued, above all others, that which was to be the ſupport of his miniſtry on earth: and therefore having ſhewn the preference that was to be given to his miniſters, according to the dignity of their office, he proceeds to ſhew, that others were but in a lower degree, and were to be regarded according to their perſonal attainments in faith and holineſs; which was evidently giving the preference to his miniſters upon account of their office, before all others, how great ſoever their ſpiritual attainments might be. This was effectually to recommend them to the care of the faithful, by ſhewing, that by providing for them here, they laid up for themſelves hereafter the greateſt riches: for *he that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, ſhall receive a prophet's reward.*

From this declaration, made by our Saviour, we learn what ought to give the preference in Chriſtian charity. The relation which men bear to Chriſt is the foundation of the love and honour that are due to them; and the nearer the relation is, the greater love and honour are due to it. Of his diſciples our Saviour ſaid in the Goſpel, *Behold my mother and my brethren:* no wonder then that he ſays to them here, *He that receiveth you, receiveth me.* By this rule our kindneſs muſt deſcend from the greateſt to the meaneſt of Chriſt's diſciples; and when it reſts there, *it ſhall in no wiſe loſe its reward.*

It were eaſy here to ſhew, the title that theſe ſeveral degrees of charity have to their reſpective rewards; but I ſhould tire your patience, ſhould I

run through every kind; give me leave only to inſtance in one, and becauſe it is moſt applicable to our preſent diſcourſe, in that of *receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet.*

This charity is entitled to a prophet's reward: and well it may; for it is a charity that does a prophet's duty: by enabling him to do the work of his calling, we ſhare with him in it; and preach the Goſpel by the mouth which we feed. It is St. Auſtin's obſervation concerning St. Paul, that when he held the garments of thoſe who ſtoned the Martyr Stephen, he did **omnium manibus lapidare*; the aſſiſtance he gave to all, entitled him to the guilt of all; and made his hand to be in every blow that was ſtruck: and certain it is, that the aſſiſtance and encouragement we give men, either in the good, or evil, they do, will make us ſharers with them in their merit, or their guilt. The charge which St. Paul gives Timothy, to lay hands ſuddenly on no man, he ſupports with this reaſon, *Neither be partaker of other men's ſins; keep thyſelf pure.* For he would have been chargeable with the unworthineſs of ſuch, as he ſhould, without due trial, admit into the miniſtry. By the ſame rule, to bring men wor-

——* Quando lapidatus eſt Stephanus primus Martyr pro nomine Chriſti, evidentius aderat et Saulus; et ſic aderat lapidantibus, ut non ei ſufficeret ſi tantum ſuis manibus lapidaret. Ut enim eſſet in omnium lapidantium manibus, ipſe omnium veſtimenta ſervabat; magis ſæviens omnes adjuvando, quam ſuis manibus lapidando. *Auguſt. de S. Pauli Converſione.*

Inter lapidatores Sancti Stephani Martyris ibi erat iſte durus, et forte cæteris durior, omnium lapidantium veſtimenta ſervabat, ut omnium in manibus lapidaret. *Item in Pſ.* 147.

thy of the office into the miniſtry, to ſupport and encourage them in the diſcharge of their duty, is to partake with them in their miniſtry, and muſt be attended with the reward that is proper and peculiar to it.

The work of the miniſtry is great, and requires our whole attendance; it is the prophet's buſineſs to inſtruct the weak, to comfort the afflicted, to viſit the ſick, to rebuke ſinners; and what time can be ſtolen from theſe neceſſary duties, is but too little to be employed in ſearching the oracles of truth, that we may know the perfect will of God in all things; and if to this the trouble of the world muſt be added, and the conſtant care of ſupporting ourſelves and families againſt encroaching poverty and want, who is ſufficient for theſe things? Muſt not the ignorant want inſtruction, and the afflicted comfort, whilſt the prophet is employed in the meaner cares of the world? And may not ſuch then, who, by their bounty and liberality, ſet the prophets of the Lord free from the world, and in a manner conſecrate them anew, and entirely to his ſervice, be properly ſaid to labour with them in the work of the Goſpel? and as they partake in the work, ought they not likewiſe to partake in the reward?

The propereſt method of exerciſing this charity, is by allotting ſuch a maintenance for the miniſters of Chriſt, as may enable them to provide for themſelves, and thoſe who depend on them: and of this kind of charity the piety of our gracious Sovereign has given a noble inſtance; which will make her memory dear to all ages in the church of God, and

will, we doubt not, be an addition to the crown of glory reſerved for her in the heavens.

Next to its preſent wants and neceſſities, poverty has nothing more terrible in it, than the fear of futurity; nor is life acquainted with a more anxious and diſtracting care, than that which ariſes from the proſpect of entailing poverty upon thoſe who are to come after us; and whom, by the ſtricteſt bonds of nature, we are obliged to provide for. After a preſent maintenance therefore, the next degree of charity is to lighten this heavy burden; that the miniſters of Chriſt may with cheerfulneſs, and without interruption, attend the ſervice of the altar; when they ſee a way open for the ſupport of their indigent families, when they themſelves, their only preſent ſupport, ſhall be taken from them. And this carries me to the ſecond thing I propoſed, to obſerve to you,

II. How truly chriſtian, and excellent in its kind, that charity is, which is the end and deſign of this annual ſolemnity.

The objects of this charity, are the widows and orphans of thoſe who ſpent their lives in the ſervice of the altar, and were found faithful in the ſight of God. Conſidered in themſelves, they are not, I truſt, the meaneſt of Chriſt's diſciples: the example of their huſbands and fathers; the pious inſtruction under which they have lived; the regular devotions to which they have been always accuſtomed; and their conſtant communion with the church; are ſure pledges to us of their faith and holineſs. But to their own, they add the prophet's claim to your charity, who has left them nothing elſe to maintain

them. The age and infirmities of the one, the youth and inexperience of the other; and the near relation they bear to Chriſt, by his ſervant now at reſt with him; contain all the motives and arguments that can be uſed to excite the charity of a Chriſtian.

Were this poverty the effect of luxury or idleneſs, we might well be aſhamed to plead its cauſe in public: but the reaſons of it are too well known; and it is ſo far from being our reproach, that in ſome meaſure it is our glory: for notwithſtanding the meaneſt of our parochial cures, and the diſcouragements of want and poverty, yet the ſervice of God has not been neglected, nor his altar forſaken: and the numerous objects of charity, that are to be found among the deſcendants of the Engliſh clergy, are an evidence on their behalf, that they *fed the flock of God which was among them, taking the overſight thereof, not by conſtraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre ſake, but of a ready mind.* And let no man grudge us this our boaſting; that we can in this church ſhew more labourers worthy of their hire, who, without gold or ſilver in their purſes, or ſcrip for their journey, preach the Goſpel of Chriſt, than any other church in the Chriſtian world can do.

Some, who ſubſiſt upon the charity of this corporation, are living teſtimonies of the faith and conſtancy of the Engliſh clergy, to God, and to their king. I ſhall eaſily be underſtood to mean the widows of the ſequeſtered clergy; who ſtill labour under that poverty, which their huſbands willingly choſe to ſubmit to, rather than to ſacrifice their

faith and their allegiance to the wickedneſs of the age they lived in. And is this a diſgraceful poverty to the miniſters of the Goſpel, which ſo evidently *bears the marks of the Lord Jeſus.*

Never does Chriſt more truly ſuffer in his members, than when his members ſuffer for him: nor can our acts of mercy ever more nearly approach him, than when we relieve thoſe who endure afflictions for his and the Goſpel's ſake. Here then, my brethren, *is Chriſt Jeſus evidently ſet forth before your eyes,* ſuffering *among you*; ſuffering in theſe members, who inherit the poverty of his prophets; which *they,* for his and the Goſpel's ſake, embraced.

Had the parents of theſe children been turned to the more advantageous employments of the world; had they, with the ſubſtance which was ſpent in their education, and in fitting them for the miniſtry, bought any knowledge but the knowledge of the Goſpel; it would have made an anſwerable return to them and their families; for every workman receives his hire, and a due recompence for his labour, except the poor miniſters of Chriſt, who have this only for their comfort, that they are worthy of it.

It is this poverty of the prophet, which was the undeſerved lot of his holy office, that now claims our charity: and have not the children a right to aſk in the prophet's name, ſince it is the prophet's poverty that afflicts them? Is it not juſt that they ſhould plead their father's relation to Chriſt, for a ſupport under their preſent wants; ſince their father's relation to Chriſt has entailed theſe wants upon them?

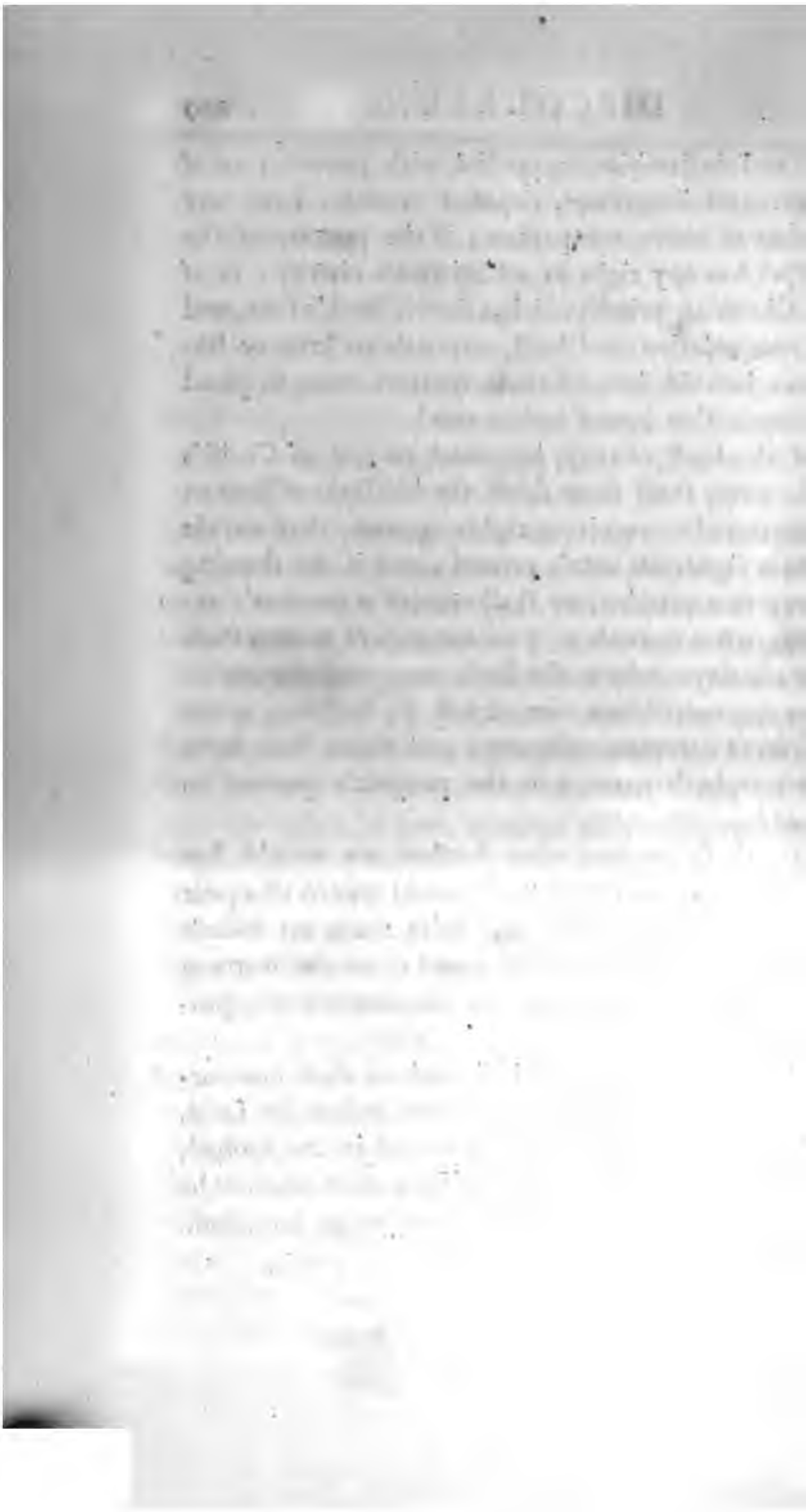
If therefore there be any arguments for pity, in

age and infirmities, oppreſſed with poverty; or if youth and innocence, expoſed to want, have any charms to move compaſſion; if the poverty of the Goſpel has any right to a Chriſtian's charity; or if the Chriſtian prieſthood has for its work's ſake, and its near relation to Chriſt, any title to love or honour; behold, how all theſe motives unite to plead the cauſe that is now before you!

If the leaſt charity, beſtowed on one of Chriſt's little ones, ſhall draw down the bleſſings of heaven upon us; if to receive a righteous man, ſhall entitle us to a righteous man's reward; and if, by ſhewing mercy to a prophet, we ſhall receive a prophet's reward; what rewards may we not expect to reap from this charity; where the little ones and the righteous are united into one object, by ſuffering under the ſame common calamity; and where both have the prophet's name, and the prophet's poverty to plead?

To theſe motives what further can we add, but only our prayers; that God would regard this poor family of his prophets, and raiſe them up friends for their comfort; that he would open the hearts of the people towards them for his ſervants the prophets' ſake.

And may the charity beſtowed on theſe poor orphans, be ever had in remembrance before the Lord. May he, whom their fathers ſerved in the Goſpel, and with whom they now reſt from their labours, be ever mindful of the kindneſs ſhewn to his houſehold of faith.



DISCOURSE III.

LUKE ix. 54, 55.

And when his diſciples, James and John, ſaw this, they ſaid, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and conſume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and ſaid, Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of.

WHAT provocation the diſciples had to call fire from heaven to conſume the Samaritans, may be learnt from the 51ſt and following verſes: *And it came to paſs, when the time was come that he ſhould be received up, he ſteadfaſtly ſet his face to go to Jeruſalem, and ſent meſſengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, becauſe his face was as though he would go to Jeruſalem. And when his diſciples, James and John, ſaw this, they ſaid, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and conſume them, even as Elias did? And he turned and rebuked them, and ſaid, Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to deſtroy men's lives, but to ſave them.* The hatred between the Jews and Samaritans was founded in a religious controverſy; and

had proceeded ſo far, that all offices of common humanity had ceaſed between them; inſomuch that when our Saviour aſked a woman of that country but for a little water to drink, ſhe marvelled at it, and ſaid, *How is it that thou, being a Jew, aſkeſt drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?* John iv. 9. The reaſon of her wonder is added in the next words; *for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* From the 20th verſe of the ſame chapter we may gather what the foundation of this quarrel was: *Our fathers,* ſays the woman, *worſhipped in this mountain; and ye ſay, that in Jeruſalem is the place where men ought to worſhip.* This account is likewiſe confirmed by Joſephus, who tells us, that there were perpetual quarrels and animoſities between the Jews and Samaritans, occaſioned by a conteſt concerning the holineſs of their temples: the one affirming the temple at Jeruſalem to be holy; and that all Jews ought to ſend their offerings thither: the others affirming the ſame concerning the temple in mount Gerizim.

It was about the time of the paſſover that our Saviour took this journey to Jeruſalem, as we may collect from what is ſaid in the 51ſt verſe; *And it came to paſs, when* the time was come that he ſhould be received up, *he ſteadfaſtly ſet his face to go to Jeruſalem.* The time that our Saviour was received up, we know, was at the Jewiſh paſſover; and this time being come when this journey was made, ſhews it to be about the time of the celebration of this feaſt. And this may account, together with what has been already ſaid, for the unkind reception which the diſciples met with in Samaria. The Samaritans

finding them upon a journey to Jeruſalem about the time of the paſſover, concluded that they were going to celebrate the feaſt there, and conſequently were ſuch as eſteemed the temple of Jeruſalem to be the true place of worſhip, and were deſpiſers of the temple in the mount of Samaria. For this reaſon they refuſed to afford them any entertainment in their village; but ſent them out to proſecute their journey, without the neceſſary refreſhments for it. This raiſed the indignation of the diſciples: they immediately call to mind the ſtory of Elias; it was in Samaria that Elias had deſtroyed the captains and their fifties with fire from heaven; the place itſelf prompted them to imitate the noble vengeance, that had once before been executed there; they knew that a greater than Elias was there now, and had been more barbarouſly treated: why not then the like exemplary puniſhment? Why ſhould not the fire of heaven come down to conſume the enemies of God's own Son, as once it did to deſtroy the enemies of his prophet? Warm with theſe thoughts, and full of reſentment for their Maſter's honour, they apply to him, *Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and conſume them, even as Elias did?* But he felt other reſentments than theirs; and turned about, and calmly rebuked them, ſaying, *Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of.*

I have been the larger in ſetting forth the circumſtances of this ſtory, becauſe in ſo many inſtances they are applicable to our own caſe. It was hatred that grew out of a religious controverſy, that bred

the treaſon of this day: it was fire, though not from heaven, that was called for to decide the diſpute: it was zeal for Chriſt, *but not according to knowledge*, that prompted to the revenge: the revenge was bloody and unchriſtian; and to every one concerned in it does the voice of Chriſt reach, *Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of.*

It would be endleſs on this occaſion to run into the controverſies that are between us and the church of Rome: the caſe we have this day to plead with them, wants not the ſupport which the righteouſneſs of our cauſe might afford it. Let them be the diſciples: let us be the Samaritans; miſtaken, nay, obſtinately miſtaken in our religion: let them have all the advantage that the parallel in the text can afford them: let them call us heretics, ſchiſmatics, aliens from the body and church of Chriſt: yet, after all, their furious rage and their cruel thirſt after blood entitle them to the reproof of their Lord, *Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of.*

Not all the boaſted advantages of their church can juſtify them in the cruelty they uſe towards their fellow-creatures. Have they a zeal and love for Chriſt? So had the diſciples. Are they provoked by the indignities offered to him? So were they. Have they faith enough among them to work miracles in his name; and will they from thence juſtify their practice? The ſame faith had the diſciples; *Wilt thou*, ſay they, *that* we *command fire to come down from heaven?* You ſee their faith: they wanted nothing but the Lord's permiſſion to do the thing: and yet, their faith notwithſtanding,

we learn from the unerring voice of truth, that their ſpirit was not right within them.

But when we have conſidered our Saviour's judgment in this caſe, and how far it extends, we ſhall be better able to judge, to what kind of ſpirit the dark contrivance of this day is to be aſcribed.

The caſe has been already ſtated, and I need not repeat it: my buſineſs at preſent ſhall be to conſider, how far this reaſon of our Saviour's excludes all uſe of temporal puniſhments in matters of religion. And,

I. I ſhall briefly ſhew that it holds in all caſes with reſpect to church power.

II. That the argument does not affect the civil magiſtrate's power; nor tie up his hands from interpoſing with the civil ſword in matters proper for his juriſdiction; however they may be pretended to be allied to religion.

III. I ſhall apply what is ſaid to the preſent occaſion.

I. As to the perſons on whom the diſciples would have executed vengeance, they were on two accounts the objects of their wrath. They were apoſtates from the true religion, and had erected a temple to themſelves on the mount of Samaria. Beſides this, they had very inhumanly treated them and their Maſter. The rule of charity is ſo very plain in Scripture, and the duty of forgiving injuries ſo expreſs, that I think perſonal affronts and injuries can with no colour be pleaded to juſtify perſecution. And therefore the whole weight of the argument lies upon the honour of God and religion; from which topics the doctrine of extirpating here-

tics fetches its main ſupport. But to this argument our Saviour has furniſhed us with a ſhort but full reply, ver. 56. *The Son of man is not come to deſtroy men's lives, but to ſave them.* The honour of God is beſt conſulted, by complying with the gracious deſigns of his providence; and the honour of religion beſt ſecured, by promoting the ends of it: and ſince our Saviour has told us, that the deſign of his coming into the world, and the end of the religion he taught, was not to deſtroy, but to ſave men's lives; there can be no greater indignity offered to God, no greater contempt ſhewn of Chriſt, or blemiſh caſt upon religion, than to make religion, which was deſigned to ſave men, the means and inſtrument of deſtroying them. The argument reaches to all methods of propagating religion which are hurtful or injurious to men, as well as merely deſtroying them by the fire or ſword; for the *Son of man* no more came to injure or abuſe men, than he did to deſtroy them: and therefore the argument is equally ſtrong againſt injuring or abuſing our fellow creatures in order to propagate the faith, as it is againſt deſtroying them. And very ſtrong it muſt be in both caſes, ſince it is our Saviour's own argument.

It is true, that all puniſhments do not come under the notion of injuries or abuſes; ſince many are calculated for the benefit of offenders; to reclaim them to a better mind, and better manners: and conſequently, all puniſhments will not come within this argument of our bleſſed Saviour: and therefore, notwithſtanding what has been ſaid, it may ſtill be pretended, that there is room for the ex-

erciſe of temporal puniſhments (for of ſuch only I ſpeak at preſent) in the caſe of religion; ſince ſome puniſhments may be ſubſervient to the end of religion, and may help to ſet forward the ſalvation of men.

But however good a reaſon this may be for exerciſing temporal puniſhments in the cauſe of religion, it can ſignify nothing in the preſent caſe, unleſs the church be veſted with a power of diſpenſing temporal puniſhments: for this reaſon cannot create a power where it is not; it can only direct the exerciſe of it where it is. And therefore, to thoſe who urge the conveniency of temporal puniſhments in matters of religion, we anſwer with our bleſſed Saviour, *Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of.* The kingdom of Chriſt is not of this world; nor is it to be erected or ſupported by worldly power: he has not intrenched upon the civil magiſtrate's authority, or granted any part of their commiſſion to his diſciples. When St. Peter drew the ſword in his defence, he commanded him to put up the ſword again into its place, with this threatening, *For all they who take the ſword, ſhall periſh with the ſword.* And in his anſwer to Pilate he declares, *My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my ſervants fight, that I ſhould not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence,* John xviii. 36.

This may ſerve to ſhew the meaning and extent of our Saviour's argument; and how contrary it is to the genius and ſpirit of the Chriſtian religion to found its faith in temporal puniſhments. The powers which are derived to the church from Chriſt

the head of it, are purely ſpiritual: the puniſhments ſhe inflicts are of the ſame nature; and the effect of them generally ſuſpended till the offender comes to another world. It is juſt reaſoning, I think, to infer from the ſpiritual nature of Chriſt's kingdom, and the ſpiritual power of his miniſters on earth, that temporal puniſhments are not proper to enforce the laws and edicts of Chriſt's kingdom; for ſince the kingdom is not of this world, the powers belonging to this kingdom cannot be of this world. But how thoſe, who derive all church power and authority from the magiſtrate or the people, can upon their own principles exclude temporal puniſhments in matters of religion, I cannot well conceive: for if the authority be of this world, the magiſtrate bears the ſword to command obedience to his laws and edicts; and the exerciſe of the ſword reaches as far as his authority goes; and therefore if the power of the church is founded in his authority, it muſt likewiſe be upheld by his ſword: and conſequently, thoſe who are for throwing all ſpiritual power out of the church, and introducing into the room of it a power derived from the civil magiſtrate, muſt, to exempt the conſciences of men from a ſpiritual juriſdiction, ſubmit them to a temporal, and leave them to truckle to the power of the ſword; which is in its conſequence, whatever it may be in its principle, downright Popery.

As the power of the magiſtrate is by ſome exalted, in matters of religion, beyond all proportion of reaſon; ſo by others it is as much depreſſed.

Let us therefore in the ſecond place proceed to ſhew, that the reaſon of the text does not affect the

civil magiſtrate's power, nor tie up his hands from interpoſing with the civil ſword, in matters proper for its juriſdiction, however they may be pretended to be allied to religion.

The foundation or principle upon which the magiſtrate's power has been both unreaſonably exalted and depreſſed, is liberty of conſcience. Though, to ſpeak properly, on the one ſide a liberty from conſcience ſeems to be the thing aimed at; for which reaſon all regard to ſpiritual matters is ſtruck out, and the magiſtrate's will ſet up as the ſupreme law of conſcience: on the other ſide a liberty for conſcience to act as it pleaſes, is the thing contended for; and therefore the magiſtrate's power, in all caſes where conſcience is concerned, is taken away, and men ſet at liberty to act as their conſcience, how erroneous ſoever, ſhall direct them, without controul. But it ought to be remembered, that the arguments drawn from the nature of religion, and of Chriſt's ſpiritual kingdom, againſt the uſe of temporal puniſhments, are concluſive only as to the miniſters of that kingdom; and cannot extend to the civil magiſtrate: they, as they are miniſters of a kingdom purely ſpiritual, can have no claim as ſuch to any temporal power; and therefore they can exerciſe none: they conſider men's actions with reſpect to the conſequences of them in another world, and therefore they denounce the puniſhments of another world againſt offenders: *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we perſuade men.* But the civil magiſtrate has a temporal power; and the peace and order of this world are his care and concern: it is his proper buſineſs to conſider the ac-

tions of men with regard to public peace and order, without reſpecting from what internal principle they flow. If the actions of men are ſuch as tend to diſturb the peace, or to deſtroy the frame of the government over which he preſides, whether they proceed from conſcience or not, he is not bound to conſider; nor indeed can he: but it is his duty to puniſh and to reſtrain them. Whenever men's religion or conſcience come to ſhew themſelves in practice, they fall under the cognizance of the civil power: or whenever they branch out into principles deſtructive of the civil government, they are then ripe for the civil ſword, and may juſtly be rooted out. Upon theſe principles, I preſume there have been many penal laws enacted againſt Popery in this kingdom: not upon the weak ſuppoſition that no man's conſcience ever led him to be a Papiſt; but upon this known and experienced truth, that whenever a man's conſcience leads him to be a Papiſt, it leads him to be an enemy to the conſtitution of this government; and therefore the government has a right to ſecure itſelf againſt the practices of a profeſſed enemy, by the terror of temporal puniſhments, notwithſtanding the pleas of conſcience and religion. And ſhould any ſect hereafter ariſe, entering into practices, or profeſſing principles deſtructive of the legal conſtitution, the magiſtrate would have as good a right to unſheath the ſword againſt them, as at preſent he has to do it againſt the Papiſts: nor ſhall it avail them, any more than theſe, to ſay, they act upon principles of religion or conſcience.

As to mere difference in opinion, which ends only

in ſpeculation, or influences only the internal acts of the mind, or produces only ſuch external acts as no way concern the public peace, I ſee not how the magiſtrate can intereſt himſelf in them: but wherever difference of opinion is attended with conſequences that may affect the ſtate, how can it ſtand with reaſon, or public good, to exclude the magiſtrate's power in ſuch caſes?

Men often diſpute againſt penal laws, under the notion of their being laws of the church; which of right they never can be; for the church has no right or authority to impoſe penal laws: they are, ſtrictly and properly ſpeaking, laws of the ſtate; they have for their end, as all other civil laws have, the good of the ſtate, and are enacted to prevent the growth either of principles or practices which are conceived to be dangerous: and I would fain know how the ſubject's conſcience can bind the magiſtrate's power from acting in its proper ſphere, which is to prevent all growing dangers to the ſtate. There have been thoſe in this kingdom, and there may be again, who found themſelves perſuaded in conſcience, that the goods of Chriſtians were common. Should ſuch a one come to ſhare with you, as he would call it, in your goods, or as the law would term it, to rob you of them, would his conſcience and his miſunderſtanding a few texts of Scripture relating to that matter, be a good and juſtifiable plea in a court of juſtice? If it would, I dare engage the ſect will ſoon be numerous: if it would not, it can be no general rule, that conſcience ought to be exempt from penal laws.

The truth of the matter lies in a very narrow compaſs. The church has no right to impoſe penal laws upon any account: in matters purely of a religious nature, the ſtate has no right neither: but of ſuch matters perhaps there may be great ſcarcity in the world; for the paſſions of men work themſelves into their religious concerns, and the controverſy grows inſenſibly into a ſtruggle for power and ſuperiority, and often breeds convulſions that ſhake the very conſtitution of the civil government. And muſt the magiſtrate ſit ſtill becauſe the buſtle is about religion, and be told that he has nothing to do in it? Surely it becomes him to ſtir and to drive conſcience out of the ſtate to its proper ſeat, the heart of man; whither his power neither can, nor ought to purſue it.

In this queſtion of the magiſtrate's right, it matters not what a man's opinions are, or how well or how ill a man's conſcience is informed: for thus much is certain, that the magiſtrate has no right to puniſh men for the miſtakes in their judgment, or the errors of their conſciences. On the other ſide, when the magiſtrate calls a man to an account for his actions, I cannot ſee that it is ſo much as his duty to inquire, whether the man took what he did to be a part of his religion, or whether he followed the dictates of his conſcience or no. What can the civil magiſtrate have to do in ſuch queſtions; or how can he arrive at any evidence concerning the truth of theſe matters? The nature of the action lies properly before him, conſidered in itſelf, and then in its conſequences; and if it tend to miſchief,

to breed diſturbance in the ſtate, he has a right to puniſh it, without conſidering whether it be a religious action or no.

There would need no diſputing in this caſe, if men would attend to the juſt conſequences of their own principles. They lay it down for a maxim, that the magiſtrate has nothing to do with conſcience; which is very true: but then they infer, that the magiſtrate cannot puniſh men for acting according to their conſcience; which is to ſay, that his authority is ſuſpended by the plea of conſcience: and if ſo, the magiſtrate, I think, will have more than enough to do with it; ſince the people's conſcience will bind his power in the exerciſe of the ſword, and he muſt of neceſſity in the adminiſtration of juſtice enter into the examination of conſcience; for ſince that is to be his rule, he ought to know and to conſider it.

But if you would attend to the natural and juſt conſequences of the principle, the truth will ſtand in a clear light. The magiſtrate has nothing to do with conſcience: and therefore on one hand he has no right to bring conſcience to his bar, to puniſh the errors or miſtakes of it; or to cenſure even the actions which proceed from it, unleſs they affect that which is his immediate care, the public good, or the private peace and property of his ſubjects: on the other hand, no one elſe can bring conſcience before him, or by the pleas of it ſuperſede his authority in any caſe proper for his cognizance. For the magiſtrate might well ſay, The action is ſuch as I am concerned to inquire into; conſcience I have nothing to do with, it does not lie before me, and therefore

I ſhall not attend to its pretences. Nor indeed is it poſſible that he ſhould, ſince it is in every man's power in all caſes to plead conſcience; which is never more eaſily pretended to, than by thoſe who have none. A man under a criminal accuſation might as well refer himſelf to what was done in the Mogul's country, as to what paſſed at that time in his own unſearchable heart; and the magiſtrate might with much more reaſon admit the evidence in one caſe, than in the other, where there is no poſſibility of knowing the truth.

It may be thought perhaps by ſome, that I have been pleading all this while for the magiſtrate's right to perſecute the ſubject upon account of religion; and ſo I have, if there be any religion which indiſpenſably obliges men to diſturb the public peace, to pervert the ways of juſtice, to be injurious to their brethren, either in their life, or property, or good name; for theſe things certainly the magiſtrate ought to puniſh and correct. But if this be what all religions univerſally diſclaim and abhor, there is no danger that any man ſhould ſuffer merely for his religion, becauſe the magiſtrate has a right to puniſh ſedition and rebellion, and to do juſtice in caſes of private injury and oppreſſion. One may be miſtaken in his notions of religion, and yet in his political capacity, as touching the laws of his country, he may be blameleſs; and as long as he continues ſo, his miſtakes are out of the reach of the magiſtrate's power.

The reaſon of the caſe extends as well to doctrines as to practices: the magiſtrate has a right to ſuppreſs all ſuch as are pernicious to the ſtate. In

Queen Elizabeth's time there were ſome who maintained, as a point of religion, the unlawfulneſs of women's government: ſhould the doctrine be revived at this day, I imagine that the plea of religion would not atone for the malignancy of the opinion.

What has been ſaid may ſerve to mark out to us the juſt limits of ſpiritual and civil power. The miniſters of Chriſt are not of this world, and therefore they have no right to extend their Maſter's kingdom by the exerciſe of worldly or temporal power. The civil magiſtrate is of this world, and the affairs of it are his proper care; from which he ought not to be excluded by any pretences or pleas of religion: nor will this bring any man under difficulty upon the account of pure religion, which never interferes with the magiſtrate's right; but where men build upon religious doctrines or practices deſtructive of civil government, they muſt anſwer to God for perverting religion, and to the magiſtrate for diſturbing the public.

Laſtly, It remains only that we apply what has been ſaid to the occaſion of this day. There are but two things which the church of Rome can inſiſt on, both of which are determined againſt them by the doctrine of the text. For, 1ſt, Whatever differences in religion there are between us, yet they are unjuſtifiable in the methods they uſe for our converſion. And, 2dly, Notwithſtanding all their pleas of religion, the civil power has a right to puniſh their practices, and did juſtly exerciſe that right in bringing the contrivers and actors of the bloody tragedy of this day to an open and a ſhameful death. Theſe are but the neceſſary conſequences

of what has been already diſcourſed, and therefore I ſhall not trouble you with enlarging on them.

How juſtly then may we expoſtulate with the church of Rome the cruelty of this day, in which they outdid even themſelves! Depoſing a king which they have often attempted, was not their work; enſlaving the nobility, which is their common practice, was not their aim; they had prepared a richer ſacrifice to the triple crown, and intended to expiate the offence of the nation againſt the Pope, by the nobleſt blood which it ever produced.

Could they have buried our laws and our conſtitutions in one general ruin, they had then hopes of ſucceeding in their attempt. Theſe *children of the world are wiſe in their generation*, and rightly judge, that to confound the peace of the ſtate, and the purity of the church, is their only way to prevail againſt both; ſince nothing can make their dominion tolerable, but anarchy and confuſion; nothing their religion, but atheiſm and infidelity.

But God prevented their malice, and turned their miſchief upon their own heads. In memory of which bleſſing this day was deſervedly diſtinguiſhed in the Engliſh calendar: which piety of our anceſtors has deſcended upon us their poſterity in new bleſſings; and this day has been again conſecrated by the deliverance of theſe kingdoms out of the hands of the ſame implacable enemies.

There is nothing an Engliſhman has more to fear than the prevailing power of Popery; and ſo univerſally it is dreaded, that Popery muſt ever be a millſtone to the neck of any cauſe to which it is but

ſo much as generally ſuſpected to be allied; and this, I preſume, has been well underſtood by thoſe who have always been labouring to infuſe the fears and jealouſies of it into the minds of the people, and to clog the work of the government with the ſuſpicions of it. If there be any aſperſion, which men ſhould make a conſcience of caſting upon their rulers, it is this, which contains whatever can be thought on to render a man odious. To deſign the advancement of Popery is to deſign the ruin of the ſtate, and the deſtruction of the church; it is to ſacrifice the nation to a double ſlavery, to prepare chains both for their bodies and their minds.

What intereſt is to be ſerved by fomenting theſe jealouſies, is, I think, hard to be underſtood: the Proteſtant ſucceſſion is eſtabliſhed by the law, and what further ſecurity can be had, muſt riſe out of the affections of the people; which will not be increaſed by perſuading them, that they ſtand ſuſpected in the opinion of thoſe who may be one day their governors. Should theſe jealouſies ſo far prevail (as we truſt they cannot) as to render one great part of the people of England ſuſpected to the princes abroad, what ſtrength would the Proteſtant ſucceſſion gain by theſe means? Would not the conſequence be, that this part of the people would begin to imagine their cauſe prejudged, and think with leſs pleaſure upon the ſecurity, which now they eſteem as their great bleſſing? What may grow out of ſuch mutual diſtruſts in length of time, ſhould they once prevail, I cannot tell; but no good, I am ſure. They who heartily wiſh well to the ſucceſſion will endeavour that there may be a mutual

confidence and good opinion between the people and the princes of the blood; that whenever the time comes, which muſt rob us of our deareſt bleſſing, they may aſcend the throne neither ſuſpecting nor ſuſpected, but may be received with as much joy as the circumſtances of that ſad (and I hope far diſtant) day will admit of. Let the people be told how fully they inherit the virtues of their royal anceſtors, that no diſtance of time or place can ever efface their love for our common country; but let none but theirs and their country's enemies inſinuate, that there is any cauſe for mutual fears and jealouſies between them.

But whatever our fears are, let them be ſo far ſuſpended at leaſt, that we may enjoy the eaſe and tranquillity which the preſent auſpicious reign affords. Let not all our zeal for our holy religion be ſpent in quarrelling and diſputing about it; but ſome of it be ſhewn in our dutiful behaviour to our governors, in mutual love and charity. Let the purity of our religion be expreſſed in the innocence of our lives; that whenever God ſhall be pleaſed to deliver us from the ſcourge of war, we may be in ſuch a diſpoſition to receive the bleſſing, *that mercy and truth may meet together, and righteouſneſs and peace kiſs each other.*

Above all, let us earneſtly contend with God in prayer for mercies upon our good Queen; that ſhe may be long continued to us; that he would give peace in her time; that no demerit of ours may rob us of the invaluable bleſſings we enjoy in her; that whenever ſhe, ripe for glory and immortality, ſhall be called to everlaſting peace and a better crown,

that then he would with a more eſpecial eye of mercy and tenderneſs regard theſe orphan kingdoms, and hide them under the ſhelter of his wings, till the danger be overpaſt.

DISCOURSE IV.

2 SAM. xxiii. 3, 4.

The God of Iſrael ſaid, The Rock of Iſrael ſpake to me, He that ruleth over men muſt be juſt, ruling in the fear of God: and he ſhall be as the light of the morning, when the ſun riſeth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender graſs ſpringing out of the earth by clear ſhining after rain.

THE words read to you are ſaid to be the laſt of David, and uttered by *the Spirit of the Lord*, whoſe *word* was *in his tongue*. They are by ſome Jewiſh interpreters referred to the days of the Meſſiah, as foretelling the righteouſneſs and increaſe of his kingdom for evermore: but in this ſenſe they can no otherwiſe relate to the Meſſiah than as they are pointed at him through David, who was a type of that great Prince of peace and of righteouſneſs; and conſequently, in their natural and literal ſenſe, they regard the temporal government of David, and ſtand as a fit inſtruction for the princes of the earth.

There is likewiſe ſome doubt of the time when theſe words were firſt ſpoken: whether this admonition and promiſe were given David upon his firſt

entrance on his kingdom, as a ſure direction to guide him through t[illegible] difficulties of empire; and by him delivered as his laſt words, and the beſt legacy which he could bequeath, to thoſe who were to ſucceed him in the throne of Iſrael: or whether they were firſt conceived and uttered by David in the laſt ſcene of his life, and left with the authority of a dying father to his ſons, as containing the true ſecret of governing happily; which he had learned both from long experience and from the influence of the Spirit of God. But in whichſoever of theſe views we conſider the text, it comes to the ſame thing; and we have the true art of governing, by which a prince may render himſelf and his people happy, deſcribed to us by the wiſdom of the divine Spirit, *He that ruleth over men muſt be juſt, ruling in the fear of the Lord.*

It is an happineſs that we may juſtly glory in, that theſe words are a proper theme for this day, the ſubject of which is the acceſſion of our Prince to the throne. Such a deſcription of the ruler's duty, produced on the like occaſion, would in many places be eſteemed a reproach to the prince; and could yield no fruit to the people, but a ſenſe of their misfortune. Unhappy countries! where even ſuch Scriptures have the ſound of treaſon; but with us, the brighter light they are placed in, the more honour they reflect on the throne, the greater comfort and conſolation on the people: for though the merit of good government be the prince's proper praiſe, yet the benefit of it is univerſal, and reaches even the meaneſt of his ſubjects.

The proſperity of a prince, who rules in the fear

of the Lord, is repreſented to us, in the latter part of the text, under very beautiful ſimilitudes: *He ſhall be as the light of the morning, when the ſun riſeth, even a morning without clouds.* The ſun is the great ſpirit of the world, in the light of which all things are made to rejoice; perpetual ſpring attends his courſe; all things revive at his approach, and put on a new face of youth and beauty: winter and froſt lag behind him; nature grows deformed, and the world ſickens at his departure. What the ſun is to the world, the ſame is a good prince to his people: he is the life and ſoul of the public; his influence produces beauty, order, and regularity, and ſo animates every member, that the whole ſociety is harmony and peace. This difference there is; the ſun in his meridian glory ſtrikes ſome parts with too fierce a fire, and the field fades under the heat which ſhould refreſh it: but the juſt prince, like the riſing ſun in a clear morning, ſhines with kinder rays, and his juſtice, being always tempered with love and mercy, can never be deſtructive.

As this ſimilitude ſets before us the bleſſings derived from a juſt prince to his people, ſo does the next repreſent to us the ſtability of kingdoms ſo happily directed. That government is always in its youth and vigour that is under the management of a wiſe ruler; its inward conſtitution is healthful, and ſo confirmed in ſtrength, that it ſtands ſecure from outward dangers: *He ſhall be as the tender graſs ſpringing out of the earth by clear ſhining after rain.* There cannot be a more lively image of a flouriſhing condition, than what is conveyed to us in theſe words. The graſs which is forced by the

heat of the ſun, before the ground is well prepared by rains, is weak and languid, and of a faint complexion: but when *clear ſhining* ſucceeds the gentle ſhowers of ſpring, the field puts forth its beſt ſtrength, and is more beautifully arrayed *than even Solomon in all his glory*. Such is the ſplendour, ſuch are the never fading glories of a kingdom, whoſe prince ruleth in the fear of the Lord.

The text thus explained leads us to conſider,

Firſt, The character of a good prince, expreſſed in theſe words, *He that ruleth over men muſt be juſt, ruling in the fear of God.*

Secondly, How great a bleſſing a juſt prince is to his people; which is repreſented under the ſimilitudes of the riſing ſun, and the flouriſhing graſs ſpringing out of the earth.

Firſt, then, we are to conſider the character of a good prince expreſſed in theſe words; *He that ruleth over men muſt be juſt, ruling in the fear of God.*

Juſtice, in the limited notion of the word, as it ſignifies a due execution of the law, an equal diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments to the obedient and diſobedient, makes but a part of the deſcription of a good governor; that which fills up the character is a more extenſive virtue, influencing the whole conduct of a reign, and denotes rather the general habit of virtue, than any particular acts that flow from it. What this virtue is may beſt be underſtood by comparing it with that, which is the true meaſure of it, the fear of the Lord. And thus the text has taught us to explain the notion, referring us evidently to the fear of the Lord, as to the pro-

per rule and meaſure of that juſtice which it requires in a ruler: *He that ruleth over men muſt be juſt*; what is meant by juſt, the following words inform us; *Ruling in the fear of God.*

The fear of God is in all caſes the beginning of wiſdom, as being the true foundation of religion; the principle from which the knowledge of our duty, as well as our obligation to obedience, is in all inſtances deducible. It is a principle which extends to all the ſtations and circumſtances of human life; and will teach the prince as well how to govern, as the ſubject how to obey.

Now the fear of the Lord either means a juſt ſenſe of the attributes of God, or elſe neceſſarily ſuppoſes it; for fear always follows what is determined by the conception we form of the thing or perſon feared. If we join to great power great malice, and a ſettled reſolution to do miſchief, the object ſo clothed ſtrikes with terror and confuſion; and the reſult is an abject, ſlaviſh fear: if we add to unlimited power as great goodneſs and benevolence, ſuch a being creates in our minds awe and reverence, and repleniſhes our hearts with filial fear and veneration. To know the difference between the fear of a father and of a tyrant, we muſt neceſſarily conſult our ideas of both, by which only we can diſtinguiſh the paſſions. To act therefore under the fear of God, is one and the ſame thing as to be influenced by a juſt ſenſe of his power, holineſs, and other divine perfections; and to *rule* in the fear of the Lord, is ſo to *govern*, as being always under the ſenſe of his power and holineſs, as

being ever in the preſence of him, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

It is this ſenſe which will make princes become true fathers of their people: for when they conſider, that they ſtand in the place of God, the common father of mankind; that thoſe, who are made ſubject to their power, are the ſons of him who put the reins of government into their hands; they muſt needs treat their people like their children, as conſcious to themſelves of executing a father's power; and knowing, that they ſhould be injurious to him above them, as well as to thoſe below them, ſhould they uſe his authority in a way not ſuitable to his character. Could a prince abuſe his authority to the gratifying his luſt or paſſion, had he this ſenſe before his eyes? Could he think it reaſonable to make the power of God execute the corrupt deſigns of a man's heart? In the private affairs of life, there is nothing leaves a fouler ſtain upon a good character, than the abuſe of a truſt, which extends perhaps only to the guardianſhip of a few infants and a ſmall eſtate; and yet a man that proves unjuſt to his friend in ſo ſmall a concern, in neglecting the intereſt of the little family committed to his care, is looked upon by all as abandoned to the ſenſe of honour and virtue. The reaſon of this reſentment is plain; becauſe every body ſees that the father left his friend his power and authority over the family and eſtate, that he might become a father to them in his ſtead: and this is underſtood to carry with it ſuch an obligation, that an honeſt man is more careful and induſtrious in the concerns of

ıers, than ofttimes he is in his own. A good nce governs with the ſame ſentiments, which are ɛr ſuggeſted to him by the fear of God: he con- ers his people as the family of the Almighty, ɛr which he is placed by the appointment of Pro- lence; as orphans committed to his care, whoſe ɔſperity and happineſs depend entirely on his ıduct: the will of God is always the rule by ich he uſes the power of God; and in every in- nce of government, he does the very thing which judges God would do, were he perſonally to de- mine the caſe himſelf: for a prince ſo inſtructed ks not *his own will, but the will of him who ſent* ɛ.

This is a general account of the prince's temper d diſpoſition, who rules in the fear of the Lord. we carry the view through the particulars of go- nment, we ſhall diſcover more diſtinctly the ppy influence of this religious principle.

The royal authority being the immediate power God, has no more immediate concern than to ɔmote the ſervice, and to eſtabliſh the honour of ɔd in the hearts of men; it is but a natural tri- te for princes to pay their Maker, to provide ıt thoſe whom God has made to be their ſubjects, ɔuld not ceaſe to be his ſervants. Beſides, this is caſe recommended to them both by their own, d their people's intereſt: it is not in the power the beſt princes to make all their ſubjects ually happy; poverty and diſtreſs will be the un- nfortable companions of ſome in the moſt flou- hing kingdoms: but religion is a way open to ppineſs, to which the rich and the poor have

equally admittance; it is that only which can make all circumſtances of life eaſy, and is neceſſary, as well to teach us *how to abound*, as how to *ſuffer need*: for this reaſon then, a prince concerned for the happineſs of his people cannot be unconcerned for the intereſt of religion. But further: the welfare and proſperity of civil ſocieties, as ſuch, depend upon the influence which religion has upon the minds and manners of the people; human laws are often tranſgreſſed with impunity; often eaſily evaded; and ſometimes, for want of due execution, they loſe their force and vigour; but the law never dies in an heart ſeaſoned with religion, and conſcious to itſelf that it owes obedience to the ruler, not only *for wrath, but for conſcience ſake*. Faction ſometimes grows too ſtrong for lawful power; and who then ſhall refrain the madneſs of the people, who already think themſelves ſuperior to their prince, and know none higher than he to be afraid of? Religion only can ſubdue the wild paſſions of men, and make the ruler ſecure againſt their attempts; ſo that in this ſenſe it may be truly ſaid, that the throne ſhall endure for ever which is eſtabliſhed in righteouſneſs.

Theſe advantages can never be wanting under the conduct of a prince, who governs in the fear of the Lord: the ſenſe of his own duty, and his regard for the honour of God, will incline him in all caſes to promote and encourage the ſervice of his Maker; and to fill up that character, which, when juſtly ſuſtained, is both the ornament and ſtrength of the crown, *defender of the faith*. To ſuch princes the church of God owes her temporal proſperity, her

liberal maintenance, and, in great meaſure, even the purity of her religion: to ſuch ſhe owes the temples of God, which are in every nation the trueſt indications of royal piety and magnificence: To ſuch princes—But whither am I going? Methinks my country chides me whilſt I deal to ſuch princes in common thoſe praiſes, which ſeem to be the diſtinguiſhing marks, the excellencies peculiar to our own. Happy Britain! that canſt ſo eaſily diſcover the features of thine own prince, whenever the image of a good one is ſet before thee! Religion indeed is ſo much both the practice and the care of our good Queen, that in this reſpect her enemies (if ſuch a princeſs can have enemies) muſt confeſs, that the world has ſeldom ſeen her equal, never her ſuperior. In the midſt of outward pomp and glory, how conſtant, how regular is her devotion; how juſt and becoming her behaviour in the preſence of God, that even thoſe who attend at the altar may profit by the example! With how tender an eye of compaſſion did ſhe regard the poverty and diſtreſs of the Chriſtian prieſthood; and how did ſhe conſult the honour of God and religion, providing by her royal bounty that the altar ſhould be attended, not by the ſervants of men waiting for bread, but by the freemen of the Lord! Ages to come ſhall give glory to God for her, when they ſhall behold thoſe monuments of her piety, which are now but juſt riſing from their foundations; a glory that will not be the leſs hers, though we acknowledge (as in juſtice and gratitude we always muſt) how readily her faithful Commons enabled her to ſupport the charge of ſo expenſive an undertaking.

This proſpect is ſo pleaſant, that here I could delight to dwell; but the time, which ſpends much faſter than my ſubject, bids me proceed.

Let us then take a tranſient view of the happy effects of this religious principle, the fear of God, in the political government of a juſt prince.

Human nature is much the ſame in all parts of the world; there are the ſame paſſions and inclinations to be found in men of different countries; and therefore it is in vain to ſearch nature, to find the cauſes why ſome nations enjoy inward peace and tranquillity, whilſt others are expoſed to miſery and confuſion. The difference ſeems to lie in theſe two points; the laws and conſtitutions of ſeveral countries, and the execution of thoſe laws. Princes, who can forget the character of their Maſter, whoſe power they exerciſe, may eaſily forget the character of their ſubjects, over whoſe perſons they reign; and though *he that ruleth over men* ought to be juſt, becauſe men are rational creatures, and have a right to be governed by the laws of reaſon and juſtice; yet it is no wonder that the ruler who does not *fear God*, ſhould not *regard men*. Power and greatneſs are in themſelves great temptations, mighty corrupters of the heart of man; and unleſs there be the fear of God to reſtrain thoſe evil effects of worldly grandeur, it muſt happen, that he that has the moſt power will be leaſt able to uſe it well; and conſequently want of religion in the prince muſt always end in the ſlavery and miſery of the people. But when a ruler acts under the ſenſe of God's ſupreme dominion, and knows that there is no proper legiſlative power but that of the Almighty; that the part

ıtruſted to him is a ray iſſuing from the divine foun-
in; he will ſo uſe his power as not to diſgrace the
ver of it, and exert it in laws and conſtitutions
orthy of the great original from whence they flow:
ıch laws muſt always be honour to the throne,
fety and proſperity to the people.

With us the legiſlative power is more happily ad-
ıniſtered than in any known part of the world;
ıd I may have leave in this auguſt aſſembly to
ongratulate with my country, that ſhe lives under
o law that is not of her own chooſing: a privilege
hich is the glory of Britain, purchaſed with the
lood of our anceſtors, and ought never to be parted
ith, but together with our own. But how is this
appineſs completed, when we have a Princeſs upon
ıe throne, as ready to give life to any law for the
ublic good, as her people can be to aſk it; who
ıkes no other pleaſure in her power, but in making
: beneficial to her country; and then only thinks
he reigns, when ſhe can do good to mankind!

Wholeſome laws, whatever tendency they have
o public good, have no effect but as they are pru-
ently adminiſtered, and vigorouſly executed; the
elfare therefore of kingdoms does in great meaſure
lepend upon the ſteady and wiſe exerciſe of the exe-
utive power: for though the touch of the ſceptre
nay animate the law, and give it being; yet it is this
ower which gives it energy and operation, and
eaches it how to influence the lives and manners of
he people; how to make them at once good and
appy. In the management of a corrupt ruler, it is
ftentimes made a ſnare to the lives and fortunes of
he beſt ſubjects; but where the fear of God directs

the prince, the law is always a protection to the innocent, a terror to the wicked. In all human laws there is an imperfection, which would often make juſtice degenerate into cruelty, were not the rigour of the letter left ſubject to be moderated by the reaſon and equity of the governor; for it being impoſſible to form a rule that ſhall regard all the various circumſtances that attend human actions, the law can in many caſes conſider one action but in one light, and annexes the ſame puniſhment to the ſame crime, wherever found, not conſidering, what it cannot foreſee, the aggravations or alleviations which may ariſe from the circumſtances of offenders: and yet in the eye of reaſon and equity there is no truer maxim than this, *Duo cum faciunt idem, non eſt idem*; from whence it comes to paſs, that oftentimes the material action and the moral action, that is, the action conſidered in all its circumſtances, are in one and the ſame inſtance of different kinds; in which caſe the letter of the law may find a crime, where reaſon and equity can find no criminal; or at leaſt not one deſerving to ſuffer the ſeverity of the law. This is the proper field for the exerciſe of royal mercy; for arbitrary mercy, that does not regard the offender's merit, is rather humour than goodneſs, and is deſtructive of the conſtitution; whereas true mercy always ſupplies the defects of it: for the mercy of the prince is not oppoſed to the cruelty of the law, (for the law has no intention to be cruel,) but it comes in to relieve the law againſt the imperfections to which all human conſtitutions are ſubject. Juſtice herſelf is blind, and wants the royal touch, which gives her the eyes of mercy to diſ-

tinguiſh between the crimes of malice and inadvertency.

From this view of the executive power, it is eaſy to judge how great the difference is between a prince who rules in the fear of the Lord, and one who has not God in all his thoughts. Even mercy, the choiceſt flower of the crown, and which has the kindeſt aſpect on the ſubject, may in an ill hand become oppreſſive to the people; and ſo it always does when it is uſed to countenance or protect the wicked againſt juſtice; and to ſet thoſe who do not love the law, above the fear of it: but when the ſword of juſtice is ſent forth, not to execute the will of man, or ſerve his paſſions, but to purge the land from iniquity, and to root out oppreſſion from the earth; when mercy follows cloſe behind, to ſkreen the ignorant, the inadvertent, the unfortunate offenders, who ſinned not out of malicious wickedneſs, from the rigorous blows of juſtice; then may it properly be ſaid, that *mercy and truth are met together; righteouſneſs and peace have kiſſed each other.*

I ſhould injure the character of our excellent Queen, ſhould I ſeem to labour in the application of theſe praiſes to her, which are ſo much her own, that I doubt not but every one here has been beforehand with me in bleſſing God for theſe rare endowments of his Princeſs. Some reigns, however full of glory, yet give us a ſecret horror when we ſee our annals ſtained with the richeſt blood of the three kingdoms; when we ſee the ſword always naked, but cannot diſcern the hand that guides it, and are left doubtful whether it ſtrikes the blows of juſtice or reſentment. But poſterity ſhall find no

ſuch pain in reading the hiſtory of theſe times, which will appear as one continued ſcene of glory and happineſs, and ſhine like the *morning light when the ſun riſeth, even like the morning that has no cloud.* And this leads me in the ſecond place to conſider,

II. How great a bleſſing a juſt prince is to his people; which is repreſented, in the text, under the ſimilitudes of the riſing ſun, and the flouriſhing graſs ſpringing out of the earth.

Good laws duly executed are as much the happineſs of the people as they are the ſupport of the crown; without them, liberty would be our ruin, and, inſtead of enjoying our freedom, we ſhould periſh in our licentiouſneſs; for liberty does not conſiſt in being free from all reſtraints; if it did, the wild inhabitants on the coaſt of Africa might more juſtly boaſt of their liberty than we do. Civil liberty is the child of the law, and thrives beſt under the guardianſhip of its parent; and therefore a juſt prince, as he will moſt regard the law, will always be the beſt patron of his people's liberty: ſuch a prince has no ſeparate intereſt from his country; he looks upon himſelf as the head of the body; and if any member grieves, he ſuffers with it: he can never caſt an envious eye upon the privileges of his people, which he eſteems as his own, and values even as the jewels of his crown. How happy are the people who are in ſuch a caſe; how bleſſed is the nation whoſe prince *feareth God!*

For, further, the very example of ſuch a ruler has a natural tendency to promote the peace and welfare of the kingdom. When virtue ſhines from the throne, it warms the hearts of all below it, and the

dvantage of the ſtation gives it an influence not to e reſiſted; religion in the height of greatneſs is an miable ſight, and the people will inſenſibly learn o imitate what they cannot help admiring. Would t not teach the haughtieſt mind humility, to ſee najeſty-itſelf lie proſtrate at the altar, imploring the livine aſſiſtance with ſuch a ſenſe of its dependence, s is but rarely found in the loweſt fortune? Muſt t not ſhame us into mutual kindneſs and benevo- ence, when we ſee with how uncommon a love the Princeſs embraces all her ſubjects, even the worſt leſerving; imitating the example of divine mercy, which makes the *ſun to riſe both on the juſt and on the unjuſt?* Can the people refuſe ſubmiſſion to ſuch a prince? Can they ſcruple to follow the law as the rule of their obedience, which they ſee their Princeſs ſubmitting to as the rule of her government.

Laſtly, There is one thing more, which comprehends in it all that a nation can wiſh for, and which always attends the government of a juſt prince; I mean the bleſſing and protection of Heaven. As kings are the immediate miniſters of God, ſo are they his immediate care; he ruleth both their hearts and their hands, and turneth them as ſeemeth beſt to his wiſdom. It is eaſy for him to puniſh the wickedneſs of a prince and his people, by making fooliſh the wiſdom of their wiſe men, and only ſuffering them to chooſe their own deſtruction; it is as eaſy to reward the good, by eſtabliſhing the heart of the prince in council and in wiſdom, and guiding him inſenſibly into the road of honour and proſperity. Time would fail me to ſet before you the inſtances of God's judgments and mercies. Thoſe of

the former ſort (bleſſed be his name) have no relation to this day; and for the latter, you might juſtly blame me, ſhould I ſearch for foreign or for diſtant examples, when our own country and our own times furniſh us with ſuch ample materials: this day, as it is my ſubject, ſo ſhall it be my witneſs alſo; and I need call no other to prove the happineſs of a people, whoſe prince ruleth *in the fear of God.*

The virtues of the royal blood of Britain were never more amiably poſſeſſed than now, when the majeſty of the crown is diſplayed in the ſoftneſs of her ſex who wears it, and ſeems rather to invite than to command obedience: ſo equally are the graces mixed, that her authority creates no terror, her mildneſs no contempt; ſo tender is ſhe of the privileges of her people, that the nation muſt ever praiſe her; ſo juſt to the rights of the crown, that her ſucceſſors will never blame her. Her reign in every reſpect has been ſo juſt a tranſcript of the conſtitution, that time perhaps may make it doubtful, whether our excellent conſtitution were not a copy drawn from the example of her government.

If the ſtate may thus rejoice in the care of her Princeſs, the church has equal right to boaſt of her protection. Our Queen was born within her pale, and learnt betimes to know and love her: when the fears of popery ſurrounded her, and when every proſpect, wherever ſhe turned her eyes, was dark and gloomy; when ſome, who wore her honours, forſook her cauſe, and ſome ſilently lamented her condition; in that day of her diſtreſs, our Princeſs miſliked her not, but followed the worſt of her fortunes, till the

wiſdom of Providence has raiſed her at laſt to become the author of her beſt, to be a nurſing mother to the church and all her children.

Whilſt Britain has been thus cheriſhed, thus happy at home, under the influence of a mild government, ſhe has not been leſs glorious abroad, extending her victorious arms to every country, either to protect her friends, or to ſubdue her foes. We had been ſo long unaccuſtomed to ſucceſs, that it was thought a conqueſt not to be ſubdued; a triumph, to defend ourſelves: the Britiſh victory ſeemed to pine for her ancient heroes, her Harries, and her Edwards, and ſcarcely lived upon the faded honours of Creſſy field and Agincourt, till the genius of this day aroſe, and taught her once more to gather freſh laurels in diſtant countries. To ſuch a height of glory has this female reign arrived, ſuch honour and ſuch triumphs has it brought our nation, that ſhould any future king prove unfortunate, Britain perhaps, grown ſuperſtitious upon the ſucceſſes of her Queen, will wiſh, *he had been a woman.*

But great as theſe ſucceſſes were, yet ſtill they brought a grief with them, which eaſily found its way to a compaſſionate heart: the Queen could not hear of victory without lamenting the loſs of her brave countrymen, without pitying even her conquered foes; and ſo tender a regard has ſhe for mankind, that, notwithſtanding all theſe honours of the field, ſhe reckons it the glory of her reign, that ſhe has ſtopped even the triumph of her arms by peace, and gave the haraſſed nations leave to reſpire.

One thing only ſhe wants to complete her happi-

neſs, to ſee her ſubjects unite in love and mutual confidence; to ſee thoſe heats and animoſities buried in oblivion, which threaten the peace of our Iſrael. But why do I ſully the glories of this day with mention of our diviſions, thoſe wounds of our country, at which her beſt life flows out, and leaves her ſickly in the very ſeaſon of her youth, and whilſt all her honours bloom freſh around her? How earneſtly has the Queen commanded, exhorted, entreated, nay even begged of you to forget your reſentments? And could you but offer up to her the quarrels of your country, it would be a more welcome preſent, than ſhould you lay the treaſures of both Indies at her feet.

Thus happy in the affections of her Queen, Britain muſt ever think of her with joy and pleaſure: and yet one circumſtance there is that often gives her pain, always when ſhe reflects, that her Princeſs is mortal; witneſs her late diſtraction, when uncertain fame variouſly reported her Princeſs's illneſs. Not Rome was more diſmayed when Hannibal was at her gates; every thing was fear and confuſion, and men began to look ſuſpiciouſly on each other, as if in every face they had ſeen a foe; the *treaſury of the city* one would have thought was plundering; and yet no enemy was near, but Britain in her diſorder was preying on herſelf.

Bleſſed be the Power, the almighty Power, that has diſpelled theſe fears! Let every heart be lifted up in praiſe to his holy name, who hath given life and ſalvation to his ſervant, and hath not *denied the requeſt of* her *lips*.

And yet when ſhe requeſted life, it was for her

ountry's ſake, and not her own; her mortality is hat ſhe oftener and more willingly thinks on than e do; and whenever ſhe does, finds nothing to iſturb her mind, but the concern for her people, ho will be left behind her: a concern that has ore than once been expreſſed in the moſt geneous regard to poſterity, by providing for the future ace and happineſs of theſe kingdoms, in the ſetlement of the crown on the ILLUSTRIOUS HOUSE OF HANOVER. A bleſſing, for which the nation an never be thankful enough. But it raiſes an inlignation unbecoming this day, to hear ſome pleadng their affection to this happy ſettlement, as a nark and diſtinction of their party; a ſettlement, hich is undeniably our common good, and, I ruſt alſo, our common care. But let no proſpect f diſtant happineſs, how entertaining ſoever, renler us inſenſible of the preſent good we enjoy; ut let every wiſh that looks to the ſucceſſion, entre in this point, *that we may never ſee it*; *that ur country may never loſe it:* whilſt we live may this lay return (and whilſt it does return, it always will) ith freſh honour: but when we are forgot; when he, who is our glory, is called to a better throne, nay late poſterity enjoy the fruits of her care, in leriving the crown upon ſo noble a family. As ong as our wiſhes are confined within theſe limits, here is no reaſon to make a ſecret of our affection o the Proteſtant ſucceſſion; it is an affection which very lover of his country ought frankly to prolaim; which is the proper way of keeping this ommon concern from becoming a party cauſe; and

ſtilling thoſe fears and jealouſies, which are deſtructive of our peace and happineſs.

May He, who ſtilleth the raging of the ſeas, and the noiſe of their waves, and the tumult of the people, ſend us peace and concord, and minds capable of enjoying the bleſſings which he has ſo plentifully ſhowered on us: and to complete our happineſs, may he add length of days to our gracious Sovereign, and continue her to be a comfort to her people, till ſhe ſhall as far ſurpaſs the oldeſt of her predeceſſors in number of years, as ſhe has already outdone the braveſt in honour and glory.

DISCOURSE V.

Acts vii. 25.

For he ſuppoſed his brethren would have underſtood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they underſtood not.

THE text is part of the dying ſpeech of St. Stephen, which he delivered to the high prieſt and the people, juſt before he was offered up a glorious ſacrifice for the truth of the Goſpel of Chriſt. The deſign of it was to ſet before the people of Iſrael the hiſtory of their redemption from ſlavery and idolatry, and to ſtir them up to attend to the preſent offers of peace through Chriſt Jeſus, by ſhewing them the fatal miſtakes they had often made in deſpiſing or abuſing former mercies. Moſes was their great prophet and their lawgiver; Moſes was in the higheſt veneration among them; for his ſake, and to preſerve the authority of his laws, they refuſed to hearken to any other teacher; and therefore rejected the Goſpel as tending to ſubvert the conſtitutions of Moſes. Yet how was this man received? How was this deliverer entertained? Was he not evil-intreated? Was he not, before he could work their de-

liverance, forced to ſeek his own by an haſty flight from them into the land of Midian? When he appeared in the ſpirit of the Lord, to avenge the wrongs of his people, and ſmote the Egyptian who oppreſſed the Iſraelite, the very next day he was reproached by his brethren for the murder, as they called it: for he had given them a provocation which it ſeems they could not bear; he *had ſhewed himſelf unto them as they ſtrove, and would have ſet them at one again, ſaying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?* So far did the private paſſions and reſentments prevail againſt the conſiderations of public ſafety, that delivering them from the Egyptians was no merit, becauſe he endeavoured alſo to deliver them from one another.

To draw parallels between the hiſtories in Scripture, and thoſe of our own times, is ſo ſlippery a ſubject, ſo liable to be influenced by the paſſions of the ſpeaker, who can eaſily overlook the circumſtances which ſuit not with his view, chooſe out and adorn thoſe which do; that in ſuch applications of Scripture hiſtory, there is very great danger of miſſing the Scripture doctrine, and publiſhing our own partial ſentiments, under the cover of the book of God, which was given to correct and amend them. I ſhall therefore, without trying to ſhew you how like we are in all reſpects, or in any, to the people of Iſrael; or how nearly our enemies reſemble the Egyptians; confine myſelf to ſuch obſervations, and ſuch applications of them, as naturally ariſe from the text and our own circumſtances.

Firſt then, we may obſerve from the text, that Moſes, though raiſed by God in a wonderful man-

net to be the deliverer of his people, yet fell under great diſcouragements from his countrymen for whoſe ſake he was raiſed up.

The people of Iſrael, at the time of the birth of Moſes, were under ſo ſevere a bondage, that there was no human proſpect of deliverance: thoſe who were of ſtrength ſufficient, were held to ſuch conſtant and hard labour, that they had neither time nor ability to contrive any thing for themſelves. Could it be expected that any genius ſhould ariſe from among the brick-kilns, to reſtore the liberty of Iſrael; or that one employed from his childhood in gathering ſtraw ſhould attempt to ſet up the promiſed kingdom? And that mere ſtrength and number might not prevail, the Egyptians had taken care to deſtroy the male children of Iſrael; ſo that the proſpect for the next generation was even worſe than what the preſent had. But the providence of God turned theſe circumſtances to his own wiſe ends. Had not the king of Egypt commanded the male children to be deſtroyed, Moſes, it is probable, had been bred as he was born, a ſlave, and ſent, as ſoon as he was able, to take his ſhare of the hard labour impoſed on his countrymen: but by being expoſed for fear of the cruel king's command, he fell into the hands of the princeſs of Egypt, and had his education even in the court of Pharaoh, and *became learned in all the wiſdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.* By this means he was qualified to undertake the great work which God had prepared for him; and Iſrael, though in the loweſt condition, had one to go before them, who had been brought up in the dignity of a prince; and yet though he

had lived in the plenty of Egypt, and flouriſhed in the court of its great king, he forgot not his diſtreſſed countrymen, but he partook in all their miſeries, with an affection which became him who was one day to be their deliverer. One would think that theſe circumſtances, together with the prophecies relating to their deliverance, ſhould have pointed out the perſon intended by God to bring about their redemption: Moſes himſelf thought he ſhould at leaſt have been favoured by his countrymen in his noble enterpriſe for their ſervice; *he ſuppoſed his brethren would have underſtood how that God by his hand would deliver them:* but, as it follows in the text, *they underſtood not.* This was ſo diſcouraging a circumſtance, that he ſeems to have laid aſide the thoughts of being able to ſerve them; he found, that to accompliſh the deliverance of Iſrael, he muſt ſtruggle as well againſt the Iſraelite, as the Egyptian, and ſubdue the ſlaves in order to their redemption, as well as the tyrants who oppreſſed them. And yet, notwithſtanding this blindneſs of the people, the murderer, as they called him, was ordained by God to be their prince and deliverer; and they were at laſt happily convinced of their miſtake, by receiving at his hand the bleſſings promiſed to their forefathers.

From whence we may learn, in the ſecond place, what confidence and truſt we ought to put in God for the deliverance of his church and true religion, notwithſtanding the hopeleſs proſpects which ariſe from human affairs.

Had we been to judge by the rules of human wiſdom and policy, what hope was there that Moſes

ſhould be the deliverer of that people, in whom he had ſo little intereſt, that he was forced to fly from them for his own ſafety? But the counſels of God are not to be defeated either by the folly or the madneſs of the people; and his purpoſes ſhall ſtand, be thoſe whom he intends to puniſh never ſo furious or outrageous, or thoſe whom he intends to ſave never ſo weak and blind to their own intereſt. And indeed, were ſuch great events to be guided by human counſels, a nation might be deſtroyed before they could agree in what method, or by what means to be ſaved; ſo variouſly are men drawn by their paſſions and their intereſt, that it is very difficult for them to concur in preſerving what all are equally concerned to preſerve. In theſe circumſtances, it is very natural for men to dwell upon the melancholy proſpect, and to forebode that ruin to themſelves and their country, which ſeems to be the juſt conſequence of ſuch diſtracted counſels: but they ought to reflect, that there is one higher than all, who can ſtill the rage of the people, and bring peace and ſafety out of tumult and diſorder, with as much eaſe as he produced light out of darkneſs, when he ſaid, *Let there be light, and there was light.* Were it not for the comfort ariſing from this providential care of God over the world, the beſt thing a wiſe man could do for himſelf would be to get out of it as ſoon as he could; the only way to ſecure himſelf from the miſeries and calamities which men by their folly and their wickedneſs are perpetually drawing down upon themſelves and others. Nay, could we depend upon this care and protection of God no further than our own merits would juſtify

our expectation, we might have reaſon ſtill to deſpond. But as there is another time in which all men ſhall yield an account of their own doings; and as God has greater views oftentimes in ſaving and deſtroying nations, than puniſhing or rewarding the preſent inhabitants; and as mercy and goodneſs incline him to deal graciouſly with ſinners, in allowing them further means and opportunities of repentance and amendment, we may reaſonably hope from his mercy and goodneſs to be more favourably dealt with than our conſciences, if ſtrictly examined, can give us ground to expect. And if ever theſe hopes are juſtifiable, then moſt certainly they are, when the honour of God is immediately concerned in the event; and when the truth of that holy religion which Chriſt ſealed with his own blood, is part of the controverſy. The people of Iſrael had as little to boaſt of on their own behalf as other nations; but they were choſen by God to bear his name, to be witneſſes of his truth in the dark ages of the world, to prepare the way for the coming of our Lord and Maſter; and though they were often afflicted, yet they were as often reſtored, till at laſt they were utterly rejected for denying that great prophet, for whoſe ſake, and for the completion of the prophecies relating to him, they had been ſo often and ſo long preſerved.

Theſe are the obſervations I had to make to you from the words of the text. The application of them to ourſelves is what I believe every body ſees as well as myſelf. And yet I beg your patience, whilſt with all truth and ſincerity I diſcharge my duty and conſcience as a miniſter of this reformed

Church, now openly attacked by its profeſſed and inveterate enemies. Since the beginning of the Reformation in this kingdom, we never had ſo good a proſpect of a firm eſtabliſhment of the Proteſtant religion, as at this time; and yet I verily think we never had leſs ſenſe of it; our deliverance is near us, but we underſtand it not. Whilſt we have been ſtriving together about things, however dear to us, yet ſtill of leſs conſequence moſt certainly than our liberty and religion, we have been in danger of being ſwallowed up by the common enemy; and the people, never till now inſenſible of the fears of Popery, have ſtood by unconcerned, ſeeming, as it were, to invite that ſlavery and oppreſſion, which coſt their forefathers ſo much blood and treaſure to get rid of. Could you have thought that this ſoil, ſo often watered and enriched by the blood of martyrs, ſhed by the cruel hands of Popiſh tyranny, ſo often miraculouſly ſaved by Providence from Roman ſlavery and ſuperſtition, would ever yield ſuch fruit as this? that England, famed throughout the world for the bulwark of the Proteſtant religion; hated by her enemies, and envied even by her friends, for the beſt eſtabliſhed church in Chriſtendom, ſhould ſo far forget herſelf, and the God who ſaved her, as to look with any patience upon thoſe chains from which ſhe was ſo lately delivered? It is ſtill more ſurpriſing, that this ſhould happen at the very time when Providence ſeems to have laid the beſt foundation for our peace and ſecurity, by ſettling a Proteſtant Prince in the throne of theſe kingdoms, happy in heirs to ſucceed him in his crowns, and to perpetuate the bleſſing of liberty and pure religion

to theſe nations. Whatever we think of this advantage, our enemies certainly judge right of it; they foreſee, that if this ſettlement prevails, their hopes are at an end, and therefore they are ready to hazard all to diſturb and overthrow it: and it ſeems to have been the main point of the policy of the court of Rome, with reſpect to theſe kingdoms, from the earlieſt times of the Reformation, to ſecure themſelves againſt a ſucceſſion of Proteſtant princes. When we have had a proſpect of this happineſs, then we have been attacked with their utmoſt fury; Rome has plyed all her engines to prevent this foundation being laid amongſt us of laſting peace and ſecurity. At other times, when the ſucceſſion has been doubtful, and ſhe had any hopes of ſeeing one of her own communion exalted, ſhe has moved by gentler ſteps, and her fury has been abated by the hope of ſwaying the ſceptre of a ſon of her own.

If we take a ſhort view of this period, it will help not only to convince us of the truth of this obſervation, but alſo to give us a juſt proſpect of the ſecurity and happineſs, which are now prepared for us, if we do not obſtinately ſhut our eyes againſt the things which make for our peace.

The Reformation had its firſt riſe here in the days of Henry the Eighth; he went ſo far as to throw out the Pope, though at the ſame time he zealouſly maintained Popery. The firſt breach happened upon the point of the King's divorce; and though the court of Rome treated it as a matter of law and conſcience, and ſent it about to their canoniſts and divines, yet were they in truth guided by mere po-

litic views: the Queen was nearly related to the Emperor; and Germany was then in ſuch a ſtate, many of its princes having received the Reformation, that Cæſar's power was never more wanted, nor more courted by Rome. In this difficulty the Pope choſe rather to hazard loſing the King than the Emperor: and the King, impatient of the ill uſage and artificial delays of Rome, took a ſhorter way to his divorce, and threw off all ſubjection to the Pope. Yet in his days he maintained himſelf and kingdoms in tolerable peace and quiet: the court of Rome had reaſon not to drive to the utmoſt extremity; Popery ſtill remained in its moſt eſſential parts; a fair inlet ſome time or other to a return of the papal power. It was doubtful alſo what iſſue the new Queen might have; and the next in appearance was tied not only to Popery, but to the Pope alſo, upon the plenitude of whoſe power her own legitimacy depended. When the King had a ſon born, yet ſtill there were the caſualties of childhood to ſupport their hopes, and a proſpect of an infancy in the throne, which could not but afford opportunities of practiſing on the kingdom for their own advantage. In the young King's time the reformation was puſhed with vigour; but alas, his days were few, and Rome had all his time the proſpect of a Popiſh ſucceſſor, which did not only ſupport her hopes, but in ſome meaſure abate her fury. When Queen Mary came to the throne, then was the time to ſee with what ſpirit Popery is to be reſtored in theſe kingdoms: the flames of perſecution were kindled in all parts; the biſhops, the clergy, and the people fell promiſcuouſly a ſacrifice to the

enraged deity of Rome: nay, ſo far did the fury of theſe barbarians extend, that the helpleſs infant, forced from the mother's womb by the extremity of her torture, was thrown into the flames again, as guilty of the parent's hereſy, and under the ſentence of the holy court, which had condemned the mother without excepting her womb. It would be endleſs to relate to you the fiery trials of that time, when no age, no ſex found mercy; but old and young, men and women were led in triumph to the ſtake, and were forced to ſeal the confeſſion of their faith with their deareſt blood; and yet at that time there was a woman in the throne, in herſelf not cruel, and by the tenderneſs of her ſex inclined to compaſſion; ſhe was alſo obliged to her country, which reſcued her from a rebellion, formed in the very beginning of her reign, and placed her on the throne of her anceſtors in ſpite of oppoſition: but neither the tenderneſs of her ſex, nor her natural compaſſion, nor the ſenſe of gratitude, could prevail againſt a Popiſh confeſſor, who firſt miſguided her conſcience, and then by her conſcience overruled all the ſentiments of nature and humanity. If a woman could do all this; if one obliged by her country could be ſo unnatural in her returns to it, what have we to expect from one, who, if ever he comes, will come with anger and reſentment againſt his country; who muſt be ſet on the throne by the treaſure and power of Rome, which muſt be repaid in the blood of heretics; that is, in the blood of the people of England? But to proceed.

The main policy of this reign was to ſecure ſuch a ſucceſſion of princes as might for ever daſh the

hopes of the Reformation in England: and for this purpoſe the wiſeſt ſtep was taken that human policy could contrive: Spain was the only kingdom of Europe not tainted with hereſy, (as the Reformation is called;) its king was young, and bigotted to the ſuperſtition of Rome, and therefore choſen out as a proper match for the Queen of England; and had that marriage produced heirs according to the hopes of our enemies, England, it is probable, had been at this time as deeply plunged in the darkneſs of Popery as Spain itſelf; where ſuperſtition and idolatry appear in more ghaſtly forms than they do even at Rome, where the court of Inquiſition ſits in the fulleſt triumph, and ſcatters death and deſtruction throughout the realm. But the hope of iſſue failing, together with the Queen's life, the glorious Princeſs Elizabeth aſcended the throne, and the Reformation began once more to breathe in England. In the beginning of her reign, hopes were conceived by the Popiſh faction, that ſhe might match with a prince of their communion, and their darling Philip was prevailed on to offer himſelf. But the Queen was too wiſe to match with a prince, where the legitimacy of the marriage muſt have proved the illegitimacy of her birth; ſince ſhe could have had her ſiſter's huſband only in virtue of that power by which her father had his brother's wife. After Philip, ſeveral others were propoſed; but theſe hopes failing, the Roman Catholics, who had hitherto been permitted to join with the eſtabliſhed church, to keep the way open to an eaſier reconcilement, were by the power of the Pope entirely ſeparated. In the Queen's old age, when the thoughts of her

marrying were laid aſide, and the hopes of a Popiſh ſucceſſor in great meaſure defeated by the fate of the Queen of Scots, there was an attempt from the ſame quarter to ſet up a Spaniſh prince for ſucceſſor, that they might obtain by birthright what they could not obtain by marriage; and a book full of learning was publiſhed by Parſons the Jeſuit, to make out the Infanta's title to theſe crowns; ſo well did they underſtand, that nothing leſs than the greateſt power could be ſufficient to introduce the worſt religion. By all which ſteps, through theſe ſeveral reigns, it plainly appears, that the utmoſt deſire of the court of Rome is to have a Popiſh prince on this throne; they reckon their work done, if once they obtain this point: give them but a Popiſh prince to their heart, they will ſoon inſtruct him what to do with vows and promiſes, and coronation oaths; and in ſuch a caſe the people likewiſe would be inſtructed to know their own intereſt, when it was too late to help themſelves.

When James the Firſt came to the crown, ſurrounded by an hopeful iſſue of Proteſtant princes, the cauſe of Popery was at the laſt gaſp: they ſaw their downfall if this family ſtood, in which there was a proſpect of a long ſucceſſion of Proteſtant heirs. A deſperate caſe requires deſperate remedies; here was no room for art and management, and therefore violence was now firſt uſed, and the horrid plot of the fifth of November was contrived, which, had it took effect, would have rid them not only of a Proteſtant King, but of their greateſt fear, the Proteſtant heirs.

By what methods they afterwards diſtreſſed the

e King, and laid the foundation of that ruin which oke out in his ſon's time, to the deſtruction of is church and nation, and one of the beſt princes ever had, would be tedious to relate. Nor need ſay much of the ſucceeding reigns, which ſo near- reſemble the former, that from the Reſtoration to r preſent gracious King, the caſe ſeems to be uch the ſame as it was from the Reformation to mes the Firſt. King Charles the Second had no ue; and if he was not himſelf a Papiſt, his ſuc- ſſor was, in whoſe time this church and nation re brought to the brink of ruin: and though he d been ſaved from a bill of excluſion by the inte- ſts and loyalty of the church, yet no ſooner was he the throne, but he impriſoned her biſhops, diſ- nſed with her laws, and broke down all the fences at were raiſed for her ſecurity; in which confu- on ſhe had utterly periſhed, had not the provi- nce of God reſcued her by the means of a Pro- ſtant prince, happily allied to the Crown of Eng- nd by marriage, and by birth. In his and his ſuc- ſſor's time the eyes of the Popiſh faction were on the Pretender to the crown, and all their hopes ntred in him. As long as there was any pro- ect of defeating the Proteſtant ſucceſſion, they kept emſelves within bounds, and were contented to ork by policy, and not by force: but no ſooner d they ſee a King of the reformed communion, ith a numerous iſſue, mounted on the throne, but ey threw off the maſk; as they did in the like ſe of James the Firſt, attempted directly his de- ruction and ruin. And will not all this teach us herein our true intereſt does conſiſt? *Fas eſt et ab*

hoſte docari: if we cannot judge for ourſelves, let us learn of our enemies to know wherein to place our ſecurity. The two greateſt efforts of Popery to bring ruin upon this church and nation by force and violence, have been, one at this time, the other in James the Firſt's reign; and their great provocation was, to ſee a ſucceſſion of Proteſtant princes likely to be eſtabliſhed among us. As this is their fear, ſo is it our ſecurity. And if we conſider the circumſtances of times paſt, the doubtful condition we have often been in, when our happineſs has depended on one ſingle life, we ſhall have reaſon to think that Providence has both wiſely and mercifully provided for our ſafety at this time. When the family of James the Firſt was partly corrupted with Popery, and near being extinguiſhed for want of heirs, how providentially did God preſerve one branch free from the infection, from which the preſent royal family is deſcended? And yet, to come to that which is the melancholy part of the application, how inſenſible do we ſeem to be of this bleſſing! What rebellions, what tumults and riots have we ſeen in the ſhort compaſs of this reign! as if the people had forgot not only the care of their King, but of their country, their religion, and themſelves: as if the fears of Popery were all vain; as if ſuperſtition and idolatry, and the very terrors of an inquiſition, were the mere deluſions of a ſick mind. Theſe are the bleſſings which ſome are contending for; theſe will be the rewards of their pious undertaking to ſet up a Popiſh prince over theſe kingdoms.

It is an eaſier matter to kindle the fires of Popery

and perſecution, than it will be to extinguiſh them. Should the wiſhes of ſome take place, and a Popiſh prince prevail over us; and ſhould he not be ſo good as they vainly expect he will, where will they go next for protection? What prince or family in Europe is left, to which they may fly for ſuccour? The Proteſtant religion has its laſt ſupport; if it fails now, there is no other refuge; and ſhould it be once loſt in England, it will dwindle every where elſe; Popery will overrun all like a torrent, and we ſhall return to a worſe darkneſs than that from which we came out. If therefore we have any ſenſe of loyalty to our preſent gracious King; if we have not quite forgot that obedience upon which we have ſo long valued ourſelves; if we have any concern for our religion and the welfare of our ſouls, which depends on it; if we have any natural affection for our country, our friends, our families, or ourſelves; let us ſhew it by a cheerful and ſteady obedience to the Prince whom God has ſet over us. All theſe motives plead not ſo much for him as for ourſelves: for if ever obedience to their prince was the true intereſt of a people, now is the time it is ſo.

The ſecond obſervation I made to you, was, that notwithſtanding the hopeleſs proſpect of human affairs, the text affords ground of dependence on God.

In this part of our caſe, the application, I bleſs God, is made to my hands. His care over us has already appeared, and we are like to be ſaved, whether we deſire it or no.

Let us then raiſe our hearts to a juſt ſenſe of our deliverance, that we may unfeignedly adore his

holy name for all his mercies; and let us ſtrive together to promote his glory by a conſtant and ſteadfaſt adherence to the Church eſtabliſhed, by a dutiful and ready ſubmiſſion to our Prince, and by love and charity one among another.

DISCOURSE VI.

MATTHEW iv. 17.

From that time Jeſus began to preach, and to ſay, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

THE deſign of this meeting being to promote the propagation of the Goſpel in foreign parts; and the ſucceſs of this work depending on ſuch methods as human prudence can ſuggeſt, now left deſtitute of thoſe miraculous aſſiſtances, which the church of Chriſt in her infancy enjoyed; the occaſion will naturally ſuggeſt to your thoughts the conſideration of the encouragements and difficulties which attend this undertaking; and of the methods proper to attain this end, ſo much to be deſired by every good and pious Chriſtian: but yet, ſince I ſucceed much abler men, who have gone before me in the performance of this duty, and have with great judgment conſidered theſe neceſſary points; ſince alſo I ſtand at preſent before ſo many much abler, whoſe thoughts have long dwelt upon this important ſubject; I beg leave to decline the unequal taſk, and to ſpend the time allotted me in conſidering upon what foot the Goſpel firſt ſet out in the world, when it was publiſhed by our bleſſed Saviour and

his Apoſtles; and what it had to recommend it to the reaſon of mankind, abſtracted from thoſe ſigns and wonders, which were wrought by the hand of God for its confirmation.

The holy Evangeliſt tells us, that the firſt doctrine which our bleſſed Lord taught, was that of repentance; *From that time Jeſus began to preach, and to ſay, Repent:* that he taught it as neceſſary to qualify men for the kingdom of heaven; *Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* What is to be underſtood by the *kingdom of heaven's being at hand*, may be learnt from the parallel place in St. Mark, chap. i. 14, 15. *Now after that John was put in priſon, Jeſus came into Galilee, preaching the Goſpel of the kingdom of God, and ſaying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Goſpel.* Now whatever we underſtand by *the kingdom of heaven*, it is plain that the reaſon why it was ſaid to be at hand, was becauſe the time was fulfilled for the publiſhing the Goſpel to all the world; and that the exhortation in St. Matthew, *Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, is the ſame with that recorded in St. Mark, *Repent ye, and believe the Goſpel.* From whence it is evident, that repentance was inculcated, as neceſſary to prepare us for receiving the Goſpel of Chriſt Jeſus.

The ſame appears likewiſe from the preaching of John the Baptiſt, who taught the ſame doctrine, and in the ſame words with our bleſſed Saviour; he was that *voice crying in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths ſtraight.* As it was his proper office to prepare the world for the reception of the great Prophet, who was to come after him,

we may certainly conclude from his preaching what was the neceſſary preparation required; and as his doctrine was confined to the ſingle point of repentance, this was undoubtedly the neceſſary qualification for all who were to receive the Goſpel of the kingdom of God.

As our Saviour, and his forerunner the Baptiſt, taught repentance as the firſt neceſſary ſtep to the Goſpel; ſo alſo did the Apoſtles. When the twelve were ſent out by our bleſſed Lord in the 6th of St. Mark, the Evangeliſt tells us in the 12th verſe, that *they went out and preached, that men ſhould repent:* St. Peter, in his firſt ſermon recorded in the 2d of the Acts, exhorts his countrymen to *repent, and be baptized for the remiſſion of ſins*, verſe 38. And in the 20th of the Acts, St Paul tells us how he had ſpent his time, *teſtifying both to the Jews, and alſo to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, verſe 21ſt; which were the very topics inſiſted on by our Lord, when he called upon men to *repent* and to *believe the Goſpel.* The ſame account he gives of his preaching to king Agrippa, Acts xxvi. 20. namely, that he had ſhewed both to Jew and Gentile, *that they ſhould repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.* In the 11th of the Acts it is ſaid, that the Apoſtles and brethren in Judea heard that *the Gentiles alſo had received the word of God.* St. Peter was called upon to render an account of his conduct, in communicating the privileges of the Goſpel to the Gentiles: when he had vindicated himſelf to their ſatisfaction, they thus expreſſed themſelves; *Then hath God alſo to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*

Now it is evident, that what God granted to the Gentiles was the ſame that the Gentiles received, and therefore *repentance unto life* was the *word of God*, publiſhed to the world by our Lord and his Apoſtles; and for this reaſon the writer to the Hebrews reckons repentance from dead works, and faith towards God, to be the firſt principles, or main foundation of the doctrine of Chriſt. Heb. vi. 1.

Before I proceed to lay before you the conſequences which ariſe from this ſtate of the caſe, I beg leave to make an obſervation or two, in order to clear the way for what is to follow. You may obſerve then, that repentance was the very firſt thing inſiſted on, wherever the Goſpel was publiſhed, before any new law or doctrine was promulged, or ſo much as mentioned. The proof of this I need not attempt, ſince the paſſages already produced do plainly contain it, and indeed the nature of the thing ſpeaks it; for the repentance taught could not reſpect any new law to be delivered to the world, againſt which no offence having been committed, no repentance could be required.

Secondly, That the Goſpel was uſhered in by the doctrine of repentance, not only when it was delivered to the Jew, but alſo when it was proclaimed to the Gentile world. The Jews lived under the divine law, delivered by Moſes, and were guilty of many offences committed againſt that law, to which they owed obedience: but the Gentiles were not under that law, nor had they been ever called to the obedience of it; and therefore the repentance which was taught, as the introduction of the Goſpel, did not regard any particular inſtitution, but that gene-

ral law of nature, to which every man owed obedience, in virtue of the reaſon and underſtanding with which God had endowed him.

Thirdly, That true repentance requires change of mind, and leads to a reformation of manners, and a due obedience for the future to that law of righteouſneſs, againſt which the offence was committed: for where the obligation of obedience to any law ceaſes, there can be no call to repentance for diſobedience. This doctrine is ſo plain in Scripture, and ſo uniformly taught by all the miniſters of our church, that I would willingly ſuppoſe no one ignorant of it. The Baptiſt ſufficiently explained himſelf, exhorting ſuch as came to his baptiſm, *to bring forth fruits meet for repentance:* to which general inſtruction his particular admonitions always correſpond. To the hard-hearted and uncharitable Jews, he ſaid, *He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewiſe.* To the publicans, whoſe crime was extortion, he ſaid, *Exact no more than that which is appointed you.* To the ſoldiers, who were noted for rapine, falſe information, and the like vices, he ſaid, *Do violence to no man, neither accuſe any falſely, and be content with your wages.* In like manner, our bleſſed Saviour, when he diſmiſſed the woman taken in adultery, he let her depart with this advice; *Go, and ſin no more.* So did he inſtruct alſo the man whom he had ſet free from the infirmity, which was the puniſhment of his iniquity; *Behold, thou art made whole; ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto thee:* teaching neither the one nor the other any new doctrine with reſpect to their particular caſes,

but referring both back to that law which they had tranſgreſſed, as the proper meaſure of their future obedience.

I ſhall now proceed to lay before you ſuch conſequences as ſeem to me to be the natural reſult of this method made uſe of by our bleſſed Lord and his Apoſtles, in publiſhing the Goſpel to mankind.

And the firſt is this: that the religion of the Goſpel is the true original religion of reaſon and nature. It is ſo in part: it is all that, and more. Repentance was neceſſary, but it was not all. Repentance was the firſt ſtep towards Chriſtian perfection. See Heb. vi. 1.

This appears by conſidering the nature of that repentance which our Lord, and thoſe who came after him in the miniſtry of the Goſpel, preached to the world: repentance ſuppoſes a tranſgreſſion, and tranſgreſſion ſuppoſes a law; for as the Apoſtle argues, *where there is no law, there is no tranſgreſſion.* And ſince repentance conſiſts in a change of mind, in rectifying what was before amiſs, and in fulfilling that obedience which was before wanting; it is evident, that to repent of the violation of any law, is to return to the obedience of it: and he that exhorts and calls you to repentance, calls you back to the obedience of that law, againſt which you had offended. The queſtion then is, againſt what law thoſe offences were committed, the repentance for which was ſo neceſſary, that without it there was no admittance into the fellowſhip of the Goſpel of Chriſt. The laws of the Goſpel, conſidered as ſuch, are evidently excluded upon the preſent view; for repent-

ance being the firſt thing every where taught, and antecedently to the publication of any of the rules and precepts of the Goſpel, the law not yet publiſhed could not be the rule of that repentance, which related to ſins already committed. At the time of the publication of the Goſpel, there were many forms and inſtitutions of religion ſubſiſting in the world: but as theſe were very different from one another, inſomuch that if ſome were true, others were certainly falſe; ſo they could not be the ground of that repentance, which being generally taught to all the world, to the Gentile as well as the Jew, muſt reſpect ſome general law, which related alike to all, and the obligations to which were in ſome degree univerſally felt and acknowledged: and this can be no other than that which the Apoſtle to the Romans has deſcribed in chap. ii. 14, 15. *When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, theſe having not the law, are a law unto themſelves: which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one another.* However the light of reaſon and nature was darkened and obſcured by the ignorance and ſuperſtition of the world, yet ſome remains of it were in all places to be found; and the general principles of religion were ſo riveted in human nature, that ſhe could not but ſtart at any thing that directly contradicted them: thus, for inſtance, in the great branch of natural religion, which relates to the worſhip and ſervice of God, though mankind had univerſally erred and defiled themſelves with many pollutions and abominations,

yet Atheiſm was as deteſted a crime in the heathen world, as it is in the Chriſtian; and ſome, we know, were thought worthy of death for being the maintainers of ſo unnatural an opinion. A ſenſe of the moral duties between man and man was better preſerved; and there are not many vices condemned in the Goſpel, which were not infamous before in all the civilized parts of the world. This general law, as the Apoſtle tells us, was the ground-work of conſcience, the teſtimony of the conſcience plainly ſhewing the work of the law to be written in the heart; and this is a further evidence, that this law of nature was the foundation of that repentance, which was to uſher in the Goſpel: for as the preaching of repentance neceſſarily refers himſelf to the conſciences of men, to point out to them the guilt of their actions; ſo muſt his doctrine neceſſarily relate to that law, which is the principle or origin of conſcience. Since then the doctrine of repentance, with which the Goſpel ſet out in the world, had reference to the law of reaſon and nature, againſt which men had every where offended; and ſince repentance infers the neceſſity of a future reformation, and a return to that duty and obedience from which by tranſgreſſion we are fallen; the conſequence is manifeſtly this, that the Goſpel was a republication of the law of nature, and its precepts declarative of that original religion, which was as old as the creation.

That this muſt certainly be the caſe, will appear, by conſidering the nature of the thing in itſelf. The notions of good and evil are eternally and unalterably the ſame; which notions are the rules and

ıres of all moral actions, and are conſequently
ſary and conſtituent parts of religion: and
fore if the religion of nature, in her primitive
was pure and uncorrupt, (which will not, I
me, be denied,) though there was ſufficient
n for a republication of it, becauſe of the great
ance and ſuperſtition which had grown upon
/orld, yet there could be no reaſon for any al-
on of it; for though the world was the worſe
baſing the religion of nature, and might want
: reformed by a divine inſtructor, yet the reli-
of nature was not the worſe for being abuſed,
ſtill retained its firſt purity and ſimplicity.
duties of religion, conſidered as a rule of ac-
flow from the relation we bear to God, and to
ınother; and religion muſt ever be the ſame, as
as theſe relations continue unaltered. If our
parent was the creature of God, ſo are we; and
:ever ſervice and duty he owed, in virtue of this
ndence, the ſame is due from us; nor can this
ion be ever made the ground of different duties
is caſe, and in ours: if therefore nature rightly
ucted him at firſt how to ſerve his Maker, our
gations being the ſame with his, our rule muſt
ıe ſame alſo. The caſe is the ſame with reſpect
ıe duties owing from man to man; and it would
s reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the three angles of
angle ſhould be equal to two right ones in one
and unequal in another, as to ſuppoſe that the
es of religion ſhould differ in one age from
t they were in another, the habitudes and rela-
s from which they flow continuing always the
e.

That the caſe is in fact what I have repreſented it to be, might be ſhewn from the particular laws of the Goſpel, and their dependence, from the maxims and principles of natural religion: but this would be rather the work of a volume than a ſermon. I will content myſelf therefore with one general proof, which reaches to every part of the Chriſtian doctrine, and yet will not lead me beyond the bounds to which I am confined. Our Saviour in the 5th of St. Matthew tells us, *that he came not to deſtroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them.* What his meaning was, he ſufficiently explained in the following part of his ſermon on the mount: in which, laying down firſt the old law, he ſhewed in every inſtance wherein the true perfection of that virtue conſiſted which the law required. The law forbad murder and adultery; our Lord declares, that not only the immoral actions, known by thoſe names, were reſtrained, but even the internal corruptions of heart from which they flowed; and extends the prohibition to hatred and to luſt, one the parent of murder, the other of adultery. Since then our Lord ſo fully declares that his purpoſe was to perfect and complete the law and the prophets, it remains to be conſidered, what notion he had of the law and of the prophets: in the 22d of St. Matthew, the queſtion was put to him by a lawyer; *Which is the great commandment in the law?* Our Saviour anſwers, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,* &c. *This is the firſt and great commandment*; and the ſecond is like unto it, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.* Having laid down theſe two great rules, he thus declares his ſenſe with reſpect to the ſubject

of our preſent inquiry; *On theſe commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* If the law and the prophets hang on theſe two commandments, then the doctrine of our Saviour, which is the perfection of the law and the prophets, muſt hang on them likewiſe. Now if you will allow that the love of God, and the love of your neighbour, are fundamental in the law of reaſon and nature, (as undoubtedly they are,) you muſt alſo allow, that whatever may be deduced from them, by rational conſequence, muſt be a precept of the law of nature: whatever therefore hangs on theſe two commandments, muſt neceſſarily be a part of natural religion; and that all the law and the prophets do ſo hang, and conſequently the doctrine of the Goſpel, which is the perfection of them, you have had our Saviour's expreſs teſtimony. Since then it appears (as I think) that the religion of the Goſpel is the true original religion of reaſon and nature;

The ſecond thing I ſhall obſerve to you is, that it has, as ſuch, a claim to be received independent of thoſe miracles which were wrought for its confirmation.

This conſequence will be admitted by all, who allow the force and obligation of natural religion, and can be denied by none, who know or underſtand themſelves. The principles of religion are interwoven in the very frame and make of our minds; and we may as well run from ourſelves, as from the ſenſe of the obligations we are under. If the law which is in our members ſhould get the better of the law of our minds, and lead us into the forbidden paths of vice and immorality; though obedience cannot

hold us, yet guilt will never forſake us; and our own conſciences will not permit us to forget the law, however our corrupt paſſions may induce us to tranſgreſs it. This ſenſe will always keep a paſſage open to the heart, for inſtruction to enter in; and there needs nothing more to ſhew, that man is obliged to ſubmit to the rules and laws of reaſon, than to ſhew that he is a rational creature; ſince if reaſon be of any uſe, it is for our direction; and to ſuppoſe a creature to have reaſon to direct him, and yet that he ought not to be directed by it, is a contradiction: ſo far therefore as the Goſpel repreſents to us the law of nature, it needs only to appeal to the reaſon of mankind for its authority, and may leave its cauſe to be tried in every man's own breaſt before the tribunal of conſcience; and how far this is the caſe of the Goſpel, has been already ſhewn at large.

But ſome one perhaps may have a mind to aſk, why he may not teach the heathen the religion of the Goſpel, as well in his own name, as in the name of Chriſt; ſince, being the very religion of reaſon, it wants no name to ſupport it? To which I anſwer: that if the heathen are ſuch maſters of reaſon, as to want no teaching, the queſtion is impertinent; and if they do want inſtructing, there is no compariſon between the maſters.

But the truth is, that all the eſſentials of true religion are contained in that part of the Goſpel, of which ſo much has been already ſpoken: but how this religion came to ſtand in need of being renewed by a ſpecial commiſſion from heaven, how nature came to want that new light which the Goſpel has

given, and thoſe additional helps and aſſiſtances from the influence of the Spirit of God, which the Goſpel has promiſed, is a matter of another conſideration, and opens to us a new view, to ſee the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of the doctrines peculiar to Chriſtianity, which, though not different, are yet diſtinct from the principles of reaſon and nature.

Had man continued in the purity of his firſt religion, he had wanted no ſecond; the doctrine of nature had led him to the enjoyment of the glorious hopes, to which he was born, of life and immortality. But when he fell under the power and dominion of ſin, he grew both blind and impotent, had but little knowledge left to find his duty, and ſtill leſs his ability to perform it. The hiſtory of the fall is preſerved to us in ſacred writ; but let the Scripture be ſilent, and let experience only ſpeak. Look back into the paſt ages of the world, as far as the clue of hiſtory can guide you, and tell me in what place the purity of natural religion was preſerved: obſerve the manners of men, and their religious ſervices, and when you are tired with the ſad proſpect of the ignorance and barbarity of ſome, the ſuperſtition and idolatry of all, tell me once more, did the world want an inſtructor or no? If it did, we have little reaſon to complain that it had one, ſtill leſs to ſtumble at the dignity of the perſon who undertook the deſperate cauſe of nature; or to reject his authority, becauſe he is greater than we know how to conceive, even the only begotten Son of God.

He came into the world, not merely to reſtore the religion of nature, but to adapt it to the ſtate and condition of man, and to ſupply the defects, not of

religion, which continued in its firſt purity and perfection, but of nature, which was fallen from the original dignity of the creation. Man was born the heir of glory and immortality; but our Saviour found him under the power of ſin and of death. If death came in as the penalty of diſobedience to the law of nature, as we learn from the ſure word of prophecy that it did, it was an evil for which natural religion could afford no remedy; for no law provides a remedy againſt its own penalties; which would be to weaken and deſtroy the obligations to obedience, which the penalty was intended to enforce. And though the world every where retained ſome notion or other of a future ſtate, and was fond of cheriſhing the languiſhing hopes of immortality; yet theſe hopes ſeem rather to be the remains of that firſt ſtate, in which nature had the full proſpect of life before her, and which ſubſiſted when the bleſſing itſelf was forfeited, than any juſt aſſurance of another life after death, to be purchaſed by virtue and obedience. To repair this breach, and to ſettle religion once more upon the ſure foundation of the hopes and fears of eternity, our bleſſed Lord *brought life and immortality to light again* by the Goſpel; and publiſhed to the world the new doctrine of a reſurrection from the grave, of the truth of which doctrine we had the firſt inſtance, and the fulleſt confirmation, in his own victorious triumph over the powers of death and of darkneſs. Hence it is that we are ſaid to be begotten again through Chriſt Jeſus unto a lively hope, or unto the hope of life: hence alſo we are told, that *God hath* now *appointed a day, in which he will judge the world by the*

man Chriſt Jeſus. Hence it is, that theſe two, or rather this one article relating to a reſurrection and a judgment to come, was the main thing which the Apoſtles had in commiſſion to publiſh to the world; inſomuch that when a new Apoſtle was to be choſen in the room of Judas, it was required, as a neceſſary article, that he ſhould be qualified to be a competent witneſs of the reſurrection of Chriſt, in which the authority of this great article was founded.

But to what purpoſe was it to reſtore religion from the corruptions of ignorance and ſuperſtition; to what end was this *better hope* brought in? Since our firſt parents, who wanted not this hope, nor this knowledge, yet wretchedly fell from both by tranſgreſſion, what ſecurity can we, their ſons, ſtill worſe than they, promiſe ourſelves from theſe advantages? It is we that are weak and degenerate, it is we that moſt of all want to be reſtored: this original corruption made it neceſſary, in order to ſave the world, not only to reſtore religion, but nature herſelf. Hence it is that our admiſſion into the Goſpel is attended with a new birth unto righteouſneſs; hence it is that we are put under the conduct and direction of the Holy Spirit, who is our fellow-labourer in the Goſpel, and in all times, and in all places, ready to comfort and ſupport the faithful. If, to ſtrengthen our confidence in him, we are told that he is in all reſpects equal to the extenſive charge; that, being the eternal Spirit of God, he can in all places and at all times diſcharge the office; this knowledge, which was communicated to make our faith and hope conſiſtent, and to ſet both upon a reaſonable foundation, ought to be no objection againſt either.

And ſince theſe articles of our creed, being beyond the diſcovery of human reaſon, are placed upon the ſurer foundation of the demonſtration of the Spirit, in mighty ſigns and wonders, they ought to be no ſtumblingblock to us; for the reaſon may teach us to embrace the remedy, which ſhe could not provide.

It is true, the Goſpel has taught us things, which by nature we could not know; but they are all deſigned to confirm and ſtrengthen our hope in God: it is true alſo, that there are ſome inſtitutions in the Goſpel, which in their own nature are no conſtituent parts of religion; but they are ſuch only as are neceſſary to enable us to do our duty, by conveying to us new ſupplies of ſpiritual ſtrength. Theſe are the additions which the Goſpel has made to natural religion; forgive its injury. Our bleſſed Saviour ſaw that the hopes of nature were loſt, therefore he brought to light again life and immortality: he ſaw that we were corrupted, not able to reſiſt evil, and therefore he ſupplied the defect by the aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit; pardon his care, and do not think the worſe of him, or his religion, for the great proviſion he has made in it for your ſecurity.

Theſe conſiderations may perhaps ſuggeſt to your thoughts what probable ground there is to hope for ſucceſs in our endeavours to ſpread the Goſpel of Chriſt in the dark corners of the world; and what is the true method of propoſing it to the uninſtructed part of mankind. But as I chooſe to decline this ſubject, and to leave it to the properer hands on which it is placed, I ſhall ſhut up all with

this petition: that God would haſten the completion of the prophecies relating to the kingdom of Chriſt; that he would give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion, that he may be his ſalvation to all people.

DISCOURSE VII.

PSALM cxxii. 6.

Pray for the peace of Jeruſalem: they ſhall proſper that love thee.

THERE is nothing places religion in a more diſadvantageous view, than the opinion entertained by ſome, that a concern for the preſent peace and proſperity of the world is ſo foreign to all the ends and purpoſes of true religion, that a good man ought not to ſuffer his thoughts, much leſs his paſſions and affections, to be engaged in ſo worthleſs a ſubject.

The inſpired writers have indeed, with repeated inſtructions, guarded us againſt the temptations of riches, honours, and pleaſures, and prepared us to undergo the calamities and afflictions of life with firmneſs and conſtancy of mind. But what then? So does the general exhort his ſoldiers to bear with patience the fatigues of war, to deſpiſe the dangers of it, and in the day of action to preſs forward, regardleſs of life itſelf; yet ſtill victory and triumph, and the ſweet enjoyments of peace, are the end of war; and the ſoldier, though he muſt not fear to die, yet it is his buſineſs to live and conquer. Re-

ligion is a ſpiritual warfare, and the world is the ſcene of action, in which every good man will be ſure to meet with enemies enough; and it is not the end he aims at, but the oppoſition he meets with, in purſuing that end, that makes it neceſſary for him to be inured to bear the miſeries and afflictions of the world. Were the caſe otherwiſe, it would be iniquity to pray for temporal peace and proſperity; ſince we never ought to ſeek that by prayer to God, which the rules of our religion will not permit us to be concerned for. So that the exhortation in the text, to *pray for the peace of Jeruſalem*, implies that we ought to be concerned for her peace, ſo concerned as to do whatever is in our power to procure and to preſerve it; ſince prayer to God for his aſſiſtance, ſuppoſes the uſe of our own endeavours to obtain the bleſſing we contend for: and that we may not think that the Chriſtian religion has made any alteration in this caſe, St. Paul has exhorted us to pray, and to give thanks for all men; eſpecially for kings, and all that are in authority; for this reaſon, *That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty.*

Upon this view then a concern for the peace and proſperity of our country is not only a political but a religious virtue; a care that becomes us, both as we are men, and as we are Chriſtians; which ſtands not upon the narrow bottom of ſelf-intereſt, but riſes from a more generous principle, partaking of the love of God, and of our neighbour; ſince, whilſt we ſeek the public peace, we ſhew our beneficence to one, and our obedience to the other.

But there is a farther conſideration, which makes

the public peace to be the juſt concern of every good man. The preſent ſtate of religion in the world is ſuch, and ſo connected every where with the civil rights of mankind, that there is no probable ground to hope, that even the religion we profeſs can be ſaved out of the ruins of the liberty of our country. If therefore it be a care worthy of a good man to preſerve the purity of religion in his own time, or to tranſmit it ſafe to poſterity; if we may wiſh, as well as pray, that he may *lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty*; or that his ſons and his daughters may ſtand up after him before the Lord in the congregation of his ſaints: if theſe be lawful deſires, and ſuch as we may by our beſt endeavours labour to obtain, our religion will never permit us to be unconcerned ſpectators in any cauſe that affects the proſperity of our country; upon which, under God, depends the liberty we enjoy of freely profeſſing the faith once delivered to the ſaints.

The Pſalm from which the text is taken turns wholly upon theſe two topics; the temporal proſperity of Jeruſalem, conſidered as the head of the civil government, in the flouriſhing condition of which the happineſs of the whole nation was concerned; and conſidered as the ſeat of true religion, the city in which God had choſe to dwell, and to place his name there; upon whoſe peace conſequently depended the ſecurity of the holy religion, which was there taught and profeſſed. The firſt thing that gave vent to the holy Pſalmiſt's joy, was obſerving the unanimity of the people in their attendance upon the ſervice of God in the holy city;

I was glad when they ſaid unto me, Let us go into the houſe of the Lord: our feet ſhall ſtand within thy gates, O Jeruſalem. From hence he entertains himſelf with the beautiful proſpect of Jeruſalem, as it was the centre both of religious and civil government, in which were ſeated the ark of God, and the throne of David: from whence iſſued the ſtreams of juſtice and holineſs, to refreſh and make glad all the cities of Iſrael. *Jeruſalem is built as a city that is compact together*; or, as the old tranſlation reads, *that is at unity in itſelf: whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the teſtimony of Iſrael, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. There are ſet thrones of judgment, the thrones of the houſe of David.* The contemplation of this happy ſtate of his country naturally vented itſelf in the warmth and ardour expreſſed in the text, and following verſe: *Pray for the peace of Jeruſalem: they ſhall proſper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and proſperity within thy palaces.* This affectionate prayer and exhortation was founded in a concern for the temporal happineſs of his country and nation; and therefore he adds, *For my brethren and companions' ſakes, I will now ſay, Peace be within thee*; and in a juſt regard for the honour of God and his religion, therefore, he cloſes all with this reflection: *Becauſe of the houſe of the Lord our God I will ſeek thy good.*

You ſee the extent of the duty recommended in the text, and the reaſons in which it is founded: and ſince we have ſo great an authority to juſtify our care and concern for the public peace and happineſs of our country, both in regard to our civil rights, and to the intereſt of that holy religion

which we profeſs, I beg leave to bring the arguments home to ourſelves, and to the occaſion of this day, by obſerving to you,

I. What reaſon we have on both theſe accounts to bleſs God for our deliverance from the late rebellion: and,

II. What obligations we are under from the ſame motives to uſe our own beſt endeavours to make perpetual the bleſſing of this deliverance.

Some arguments there are, which require rather a capacity of feeling, than any great acuteneſs of judgment, to apprehend them: ſuch are they which are drawn from the experience of ſenſe, from pleaſure or pain, from the conveniences or inconveniences of life; of which no man is a capable judge, who wants the ſenſe proper to diſtinguiſh between the pleaſure and the pain, or the experience of the convenience or inconvenience under debate. One would think that an ordinary imagination would ſerve to repreſent the difference of liberty and ſlavery; of the ſtate, in which every man may ſit under his own vine, and eat his bread with cheerfulneſs; and that condition, in which nothing is to be called our own, but the miſery of ſubmitting to deſpotic power: and yet we find, that the generality of men are not maſters of ſo much reflection as is neceſſary to arrive at this ſmall degree of knowledge in the affairs of the world. It is the obſervation of Tacitus, the Roman hiſtorian, one allowed to be a good judge of mankind, that the people of Rome were prepared for ſlavery by the long reign of Auguſtus, which had almoſt worn out the race of men that had taſted the ſweets of liberty and freedom. Ours ſeems to

the doctrine of their church, taught by Councils, confirmed by Popes, and defended by their ableſt ſchoolmen and divines, that heretics have no right to dominion; that they may be depoſed by the Pope, and their ſubjects abſolved from all bonds of allegiance to them. And their practice has been of a piece with their doctrine: Henry the Third of France was excommunicated for a leſs crime, for favouring only the ſucceſſion of a Proteſtant prince; and thus excommunicated, was murdered by a poor monk. Henry the Fourth was ſo ſtrongly oppoſed by the League, animated by the Pope, that he could never fix himſelf in the throne till he changed his religion. If we come to our own country, Queen Elizabeth was formally depoſed by a bull from Rome, and her ſubjects abſolved from their obedience to her: nay, thrice was ſhe depoſed by three Popes, to ſhew how conſtant they were to this point. When King James the Firſt came to the crown, his firſt compliment from Rome was by a mandate of Clement the Eighth, declaring him incapable of holding the crown, becauſe he was an heretick; that is, becauſe he was a Proteſtant; and therefore enjoining his ſubjects to yield him no duty or obedience. But notwithſtanding this doctrine, ſo well confirmed by authority and practice, yet conſidering the preſent ſtate of Britain, and the views of Rome, I ſhould not be ſurpriſed to hear her emiſſaries maintaining, with all ſolemnity, the contrary opinion. When a Proteſtant prince was to be depoſed by Roman Catholics, it was proper encouragement to tell them, that hereſy was a forfeiture of dominion; but now, that they want the aſſiſtance

of the Proteſtants of England to advance a Popiſh prince to the throne, we may certainly expect to hear from them, that religion is out of the queſtion when the claims and titles of princes are under debate; and perhaps too we may be ready enough to believe them; ſo much *wiſer are the children of this world in their generation than the children of light.*

The principles, upon which the legality of the preſent eſtabliſhment is maintained, are I think but improperly made a part of the preſent quarrel which divides the nation. There are but few who have not precluded themſelves on this point: thoſe I mean who have had courage and plainneſs enough to own their ſenſe, and to forego the advantages, either of birth or education, rather than give a falſe ſecurity to the government, which under their preſent perſuaſion they could not make good. To theſe I have nothing more to ſay, than to wiſh them what I think they well deſerve, a better cauſe: but to us, who had bound ourſelves by previous oaths and obligations in the moſt ſolemn manner in the world, the acceſſion of his Majeſty could adminiſter no occaſion of reconſidering this queſtion: there was nothing new required of us; we had no faith to give, which was not already plighted, and bound upon our ſouls by the moſt ſacred engagements. Thoſe therefore under theſe circumſtances, who have openly engaged, or ſecretly favoured the rebellion, are void of all excuſe; they are guilty of the greateſt crime under the greateſt aggravation; and ſeem to have no refuge left, but that which was Adam's policy, *who hid himſelf from the preſence of*

the Lord God amongſt the trees of the garden, becauſe he had nothing to cover his nakedneſs.

Should any ſuch, quitting all pretences of diſſatisfaction with the lawfulneſs of the preſent government, plead diſobligations or reſentments of any ſort, as the ground of their proceedings, to them we anſwer in the words of our bleſſed Saviour, *Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of.* Where did they learn, that rebellion is the proper remedy in ſuch caſes? The Church of England has no ſuch doctrine; and if they cannot govern their own paſſions, yet, in juſtice to her, they ought not to uſe her name in a cauſe which ſhe ever has, and will diſclaim.

It is perhaps too high a degree of virtue to expect in this age, that men ſhould act with a ſteady view to the public good, without being drawn at all by the bias of their own intereſt. Whoever builds upon a dependence on ſuch a behaviour from any ſet of men, will, I believe, find himſelf miſtaken. Allow then, what cannot be avoided, that men will differ in their views and private intereſts, yet ſtill methinks there is one common concern, which is the preſervation of the whole, in the ſecurity of which every man's private fortune is founded; and it is as abſurd for a man under any reſentment whatever to enter into meaſures deſtructive of his country's peace, as it would be for him to burn the title to his eſtate, becauſe the tenant was behind in his rent.

If therefore we have any concern for the peace and happineſs of our country, or any zeal to pre-

ſerve the light of the Goſpel with which theſe kingdoms have been bleſſed; or if our conſciences are not hardened againſt the influence of the moſt ſolemn oaths and obligations, under which we have bound ourſelves to be true and faithful to our preſent Sovereign; we muſt deteſt this rebellion, and with ſincere hearts adore the goodneſs of God, who hath wrought this deliverance for us. Let us then, in the ſecond place, conſider,

II. What obligations we are under from the ſame motives to uſe our own beſt endeavours to make perpetual the bleſſing of this deliverance.

This obligation is but the neceſſary conſequence of the duty which we are met this day to perform. Thankſgiving is little more than a ſolemn piece of mockery, if we have no value for the deliverance for which we would ſeem to be thankful. If any, or if all the reaſons already mentioned, ought to excite us to pray for the peace of our country, or to bleſs God for reſtoring it, they muſt alſo move us to do what is in our own power to preſerve it; ſince in vain do we pray for the aſſiſtance of God in any caſe, whilſt we neglect to uſe the means of helping ourſelves, which he has put in our power.

How much the preſervation of the preſent eſtabliſhment depends on the ſucceſs of public councils, every body knows; and yet ſhould I, by any particular application, ſeem to ſuppoſe that your zeal in this cauſe wanted a ſpur, I might well be thought to *be the only ſtranger in Iſrael, and not to have known the things which have come to paſs in theſe days.*

What private men can do, they beſt know: many are certainly well qualified by their repu-

tation, their ſtation, and great abilities, to promote the intereſt of their king and country; and ſurely it is every man's duty to do what he thinks he lawfully may do, to ſerve theſe deſirable ends. And this would be allowed to be a very reaſonable demand, were not the nation unhappily divided into factions, which have ſwallowed up all public duty, and transferred to themſelves that allegiance which is due only to the crown. Were there but half the zeal to ſerve the public, which men daily expreſs for the intereſt of their ſeveral parties, there would be but little encouragement for a ſecond attempt to diſturb our peace.

It is wonderful to obſerve, in all caſes, this ſteady adherence to party: thoſe who aſcribe it to mere corruption, and the ſordid ends of private gain, ſee but little into the true cauſe; there is another principle more remote from common obſervation, which has a greater influence; a principle in itſelf more generous, though oftentimes in its conſequences not leſs pernicious; I mean, the regard which men have for their own credit and reputation. This is the natural fruit of the beſt ſoil; every good man has it, and it is the life of virtuous actions, when its views are rightly directed. But where kingdoms are divided into oppoſite factions, the true ſtandard of reputation will always be loſt, and men will grow into eſteem, not for their virtuous actions, but for their party merit. Hence it comes to paſs, that in civil diſputes, it is as reproachful to deviate from your leader's opinion, as it is for a private ſoldier to deſert his general in the day of battle. The obligations of the public duty, or of private opinion, will

obtain no quarter for you; for ſuch is your caſe, that you may with leſs hazard of reproach commit almoſt any vice, than venture to be in the right without the ſupport of a majority. This evil is the more to be lamented, becauſe its infection ſpreads moſt eaſily among the beſt. Helvidius Priſcus lived in the degeneracy of the empire, but had all the virtues of an old Roman; yet he was obſerved to be *appetentior famæ, quando etiam ſapientibus*, as the hiſtorian remarks, *cupido gloriæ noviſſima exuitur*. But whatever may be ſaid in excuſe for this paſſion, in matters which a willing caſuiſt may perſuade himſelf to be indifferent; yet ſurely it is to be highly blamed, when the proſperity of our King, our country, and our religion are at ſtake: in ſuch a time every man ſhould run the hazard of being true to the public, eſpecially if he cannot deſert it without being falſe to himſelf.

There is another evil, not much unlike the former, though of a different kind, which is owing alſo to our unhappy diviſions. If, on one ſide, it may be ſometimes difficult for men who have no ill intention to the public, to diſcharge their duty to it; on the other, there will always be ſome to rejoice when they do wrong; though zeal for the government never produces a more prepoſterous effect, than when it makes men take pleaſure in the number or in the perverſeneſs of its enemies. Thoſe who are ſincerely and with any judgment in the intereſt of the King, have nothing more to wiſh, than to ſee the hearts of all his Majeſty's ſubjects united in obedience and affection to him; or, if that is not to be obtained, to ſee as many as can be. But there

is a little kind of men, who miſtaking their party zeal for affection to the government, ſeem tranſported when thoſe, whom they have been taught to think their enemies, do by any miſbehaviour render themſelves obnoxious to the preſent powers: as they rejoice in ſuch miſbehaviour, ſo are they apt ſometimes to provoke it, and think themſelves never better entitled to plead their own merit, than when they have urged others to ſuch things, as a wiſe man and a friend to the government would with all his care have laboured to prevent.

Under theſe unhappy circumſtances there is more reaſon to wiſh, than there is ground to hope, for peace and unanimity at home. It is an eaſy matter for a few deſigning men to fill the people with great, and, at the ſame time, very unjuſt apprehenſions from their governors; though his Majeſty, in his great wiſdom and goodneſs, took at the very beginning the propereſt ſtep to prevent this miſchief, by declaring that he would always make the conſtitution in church and ſtate the rule of his adminiſtration. As our conſtitution in church has many friends, ſo to our great misfortune has it ſome enemies; and as it cannot be diſſembled, but that the fears and jealouſies on one ſide, ſo it will hardly be denied, but that the hopes and expectations on the other, have been very unreaſonable. And conſidering how people, in a ſtate of ſuſpicion, watch and obſerve each other, how naturally the fears of one increaſe by ſeeing the hopes of the other, without knowing or inquiring what ground or foundation there is for them; it will be neceſſary, in order to quiet the angry ſpirit that is among us, to ſuppreſs

theſe hopes, as well as to allay thoſe fears: and I pray God to reduce them both to their proper bounds, that we may all be content to obey on the ſame terms, on which his Majeſty has aſſured us he is diſpoſed to govern.

But above all, let us take care to juſtify ourſelves in our concern for our holy religion, which is our beſt plea, and ſureſt pledge of divine favour, by adorning in our lives and converſations the doctrine which we profeſs. We have with commendable zeal, on many occaſions, ſtood in defence of our religion, at the expence of the blood and treaſure of the nation: let it not be obſerved by our enemies, that the religion of England is a mere watch-word for an army, never valued but when it is to be fought for; and in times of peace laid by, condemned to ruſt, with other the uſeleſs arms and inſtruments of war. Our religion has domeſtic as well as foreign enemies; we have ſeen with what an uncommon zeal it has been attacked by infidels; profeſſing not to introduce any religious perſuaſion, but to throw out all. Theſe men, who deride all religion, will be found in the end to be the beſt agents for them who labour to bring in the worſt: and the intereſt of our country being ſo united to the cauſe of religion, ſuch profane liberty is deſtructive of our ſecurity, ſince every heart, that is alienated from a ſenſe of God and religion, carries off with it a pair of hands from the defence of the public.

To a zeal for true religion let us add charity, the crown of all virtues; and let us ſanctify this day of our deliverance, by laying aſide all hatred, malice, and deſire of revenge; that we may with one heart,

and one mind, glorify God for his mercies, and implore his protection for ourſelves, our King, and our country; that he would give us the bleſſings of truth and peace; that he would long preſerve our Sovereign; and that there may never want a Proteſtant Prince deſcended from him, to *go in and out before his people*.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ACTS xx. 35.

I have ſhewed you all things, how that ſo labouring ye ought to ſupport the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jeſus, how he ſaid, It is more bleſſed to give than to receive.

THESE words concluded the moving ſpeech which St. Paul made to the elders of the church of Epheſus, when he took his final leave of them. The time he had to diſcourſe with them was but little, and the occaſion was very ſolemn; which circumſtances would determine him to mention nothing to them but what he judged to be of the laſt conſequence and concern; and what they ought always to remember, as the dying words of their great teacher and apoſtle. At the 25th verſe, you find him, under the paſſion of a father, bidding adieu to his children and the world; *And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, ſhall ſee my face no more.* But to ſhew that this care of them would outlive himſelf, he gives them his laſt advice, the beſt, the only legacy he had to beſtow. Two things he eſpecially recommends to them; the care of the church of God, and the providing for the neceſſities of the

poor and helpleſs. The former charge you have at the 28th verſe; *Take heed therefore unto yourſelves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made you overſeers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchaſed with his own blood.* The latter you read in the words of the text: *I have ſhewed you all things, how that ſo labouring ye ought to ſupport the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jeſus, how he ſaid, It is more bleſſed to give than to receive.*

There are ſome duties ſo eſſential to religion, ſo neceſſary to form the character of a good man, much more of a good Chriſtian, that they always have been, and I hope will always continue to be, the Preacher's common topic. Yet this, I know, is in ſome reſpects a diſadvantage, and that exhortations of this kind are eſteemed to be ſo much things of courſe, that they are often uſed with more effect by others, from whom they are leſs expected. I have need therefore to beſpeak your favour; that I may be heard on this ſubject, without incurring the cenſure of being thought a common beggar. And yet not to diſſemble my intention, beg I would; partly indeed for your ſakes, whoſe neceſſities can no otherwiſe be relieved but by charity; but much more for your ſakes, whoſe ample fortunes, if rightly adminiſtered, entitle you to the choiceſt bleſſings of the Goſpel: *For it is more bleſſed to give than to receive.*

In ſpeaking of the duty and obligations of charity, in this reſtrained ſenſe of the word, in which it regards only the temporal wants and neceſſities of our brethren; there are three things proper to be conſidered.

Firſt, How far the obligations of this duty extend; for that they do not extend equally to all is evident, becauſe ſuch as are qualified to receive are in all ordinary caſes exempted from giving.

Secondly, Who are duly qualified to receive charity.

Thirdly, What is the bleſſing and reward that attends upon the faithful diſcharge of this duty.

The firſt thing to be conſidered is, how far this duty extends; I have ſhewed you all things, ſays the Apoſtle, *how that ſo labouring* ye ought to ſupport the weak. In the verſes preceding the text he had ſet before them his own example, and the method he took to provide for himſelf, and thoſe who were with him. *I have coveted*, ſays he, *no man's ſilver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourſelves know, that theſe hands have miniſtered unto my neceſſities, and to them that were with me.* Now the exhortation of the text being founded on the example which the Apoſtle himſelf had given, and thoſe words, *That ſo labouring ye ought to ſupport the weak*, neceſſarily referring to ſuch labour as St. Paul *had undergone*, when his own hands miniſtered to his own neceſſities; it is evident, that the Apoſtle directed, that part of what they could earn, even by the labour of their hands, ſhould be ſet aſide and dedicated to works of charity. The ſame direction is repeated in his Epiſtle to the Epheſians, chap. iv. 28. *Let him that ſtole ſteal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* Where you find labour enjoined them, not only that they may have

an honeſt means of ſupporting themſelves, but that they might have ſomething likewiſe to ſpare in charity to ſuch as were in diſtreſs, and unable to work for their own living. As the Apoſtle pleads his own example to the elders of the church of Epheſus; ſo does he likewiſe to the Theſſalonians, in his 2d Epiſtle wrote to them; *Neither did we*, ſays he, *eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not becauſe we have not power*, (i. e. a right to claim a maintenance as miniſters of the Goſpel,) *but to make ourſelves an enſample for you to follow us.* chap. iii. ver. 8, 9.

From theſe paſſages laid together it is manifeſt, that the Apoſtle calls upon all indifferently, the elders and paſtors of the church, as well as others, to labour, working with their hands; and he charges on their labour, not only the duty of providing for themſelves and families, but alſo the care of ſupporting thoſe among them who were indigent and neceſſitous: but the meaſures and proportions of charity not being things of a determinate nature, but ſuch as are relative to the circumſtances and conditions of times and perſons, and vary and change together with them; it muſt be abſurd to apply the rules relating to charity, which are to be found in the holy Scriptures, to ourſelves and our own times, without making a due allowance for the difference in our circumſtances and theirs to whom the rules were firſt directed. And therefore, to give you a juſt ſenſe of the meaning of the text, and of other apoſtolical rules concerning the practice of charity, it will be

neceſſary to ſhew you what was the ſtate of the times and perſons to which thoſe rules have reference.

The church of Chriſt at the firſt preaching of the Goſpel conſiſted almoſt wholly of the poor and indigent, ſuch as were hardly able to ſupport and maintain themſelves by their labour, much leſs to be liberal towards the ſupport of others: for this reaſon St. Paul choſe rather to work for his bread with his own hands, than to make his miniſtry burdenſome to the churches; though at the ſame time he aſſerts the right he had to be ſupported by them in his function, notwithſtanding the narrowneſs of their own circumſtances. The learning and education of the firſt converts were no better than their fortunes; and even the rulers of the church were oftentimes taken from trades and mean employments; the Spirit of God wonderfully ſupplying their defects, and enabling them under all outward diſadvantages to promote the cauſe of the Goſpel with great courage and ſucceſs. Upon this account the Goſpel is ſpoken of as the peculiar portion and inheritance of the poor; our Saviour gives it as a characteriſtic of himſelf and his miſſion, that *the poor had the Goſpel preached to them*, Matth. xi. 25. And St. Paul addreſſing to the Corinthians, diſcovers to us the condition of that church; *Ye ſee your calling, brethren, how that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath choſen the fooliſh things of the world, to confound the wiſe; and God hath choſen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and baſe things of the world, and things which are de-*

ſpiſed, hath God choſen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28.

Theſe circumſtances of the firſt Chriſtians conſidered, it is eaſy to juſtify the propriety of the Apoſtle's exhortation in the text. When you reflect how poverty reigned through the whole body, you will not think it ſtrange that the Apoſtle ſpeaks of labour, even to the elders of the church; ſince their own labour and work were the only riches the Chriſtians of thoſe days were in poſſeſſion of; and it muſt be either perverſeneſs or ignorance that makes ſome argue from this, and other like paſſages of Scripture, againſt a ſettled maintenance for the Chriſtian clergy; without ſeeing, that the conſequence, if there be any thing in it, muſt equally affect the whole body of Chriſtians: for the reaſon why the governors of the church were poor, was, becauſe the whole church was ſo; and if the example muſt be preſſed to oblige the preſent times, all men muſt part either with their eſtates, or their religion; otherwiſe we cannot be in the condition of the primitive church. It would at this time of day be no very proper exhortation to call upon all Chriſtians, without diſtinction, to work with their hands, that they might have ſomething to ſpare in charity; but it was not only proper, but neceſſary in the beginning, when there was no other ſource of riches in the church, but the work and labour of Chriſtians. In the text, you ſee the elders, and with them all others, were called upon to labour, that they might be able to ſupport the weak: and in the Epiſtle to the Epheſians, the precept is gene-

ral, *To labour, working with the hands*, that there may be ſomething to ſpare to him that needeth. Can you imagine, that nothing is fit to be dedicated to charity but what is earned by bodily labour? or that thoſe who have plentiful fortunes and eſtates are obliged to work with their hands, that they may by their labour ſupply the wants of others, which they can better and more effectually ſupply out of their large revenues? It may be, and certainly is, very proper for us to exhort you to part with ſomething out of your abundance to eaſe the wants of the poor; to ſpare ſomething out of the ſuperfluities of fortune to ſupport the neceſſitous: but it had been very improper for the Apoſtles ſo to have exhorted Chriſtians, at a time when there were none who had either abundance or ſuperfluity; all they could do was to admoniſh and perſuade thoſe who were able to labour more abundantly, that they might be in a condition to contribute to the relief of ſuch as were unfit for work by age, ſickneſs, or other infirmity. Thoſe who are able to work, who are bleſſed with health and ſtrength, and ſoundneſs of limbs, are rich with reſpect to thoſe who are incapable through want of limbs, or by the weight of years, to aſſiſt themſelves; and therefore, when bodily labour was the whole riches of the church, there was a neceſſity that the ſtrong ſhould work to ſupport the weak; or that the weak ſhould periſh in their want and poverty. And this ſhews the reaſon of ſuch precepts of charity, in which men are moved to part with ſomething, even out of the little they can earn by the ſweat of their brows.

This will help us likewiſe to underſtand ſome other paſſages of Scripture relating to the exerciſe of charity. St. Paul gives the Corinthians timely notice of his intention to make a collection among them for charitable uſes; and exhorts them to lay by a little every week, as they could ſpare it, that he might find them prepared to contribute when he ſhould come. Now this plainly regards their poverty and low circumſtances; for had they been rich, there had been no need for it; but they were not ſo wealthy as to pay bills at ſight; and therefore their only way was to prepare their ſum by little and little, as their circumſtances would give them leave to ſpare it.

In the ſecond Epiſtle to the Corinthians, the Apoſtle is upon the ſame argument, and preſſes them to be liberal with great earneſtneſs; but that he might not ſeem to bear too hard upon their neceſſities, he thus corrects himſelf; *I mean not that other men be eaſed, and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a ſupply for their want*, 2 Cor. viii. 13, 14. What does this equality mean, which he would introduce between the givers and receivers of charity? Muſt we ſtrip ourſelves ſo far as to be upon a level with the poor, who aſk our alms? This is a hard ſaying, and, if purſued ſtrictly, would introduce great confuſion and diſorder into the world. But if you conſider the condition of the church when the Apoſtle wrote, you will ſee how properly he addreſſes them. They might well have ſaid to him, Why muſt all the burden lie on us? What have we that we do not purchaſe by irkſome toil and labour? To pre-

vent which complaint, the Apoſtle is beforehand with them in declaring, that he meant not that they ſhould be burdened, and others ſet at eaſe: had he been applying to the rich and wealthy, there could have been no occaſion for this caution, for they can give with a liberal hand, and yet not be burdened. So likewiſe the equality he ſpeaks of has the ſame view; he preſſes it not as in itſelf juſt or neceſſary; but in reſpect to the time, it could not be avoided; for when there are none but poor to relieve the poor, it is plain how near the equality muſt be between the giver and the receiver. This equality, therefore, the Apoſtle does not lay down as a general rule and proportion to be obſerved in charity; but rather excuſes it, as the neceſſary circumſtance of the charity of thoſe times.

From what has been ſaid, we may learn to give an anſwer to the firſt inquiry, namely, how far the duty of charity extends? The Apoſtle brings all under the obligations of it, who are able to labour; but this muſt be mitigated by the difference of circumſtances between us and thoſe to whom the Apoſtle ſpoke. He preſſed all to labour, in order to their being charitable; the reaſon is plain, he had none to ſpeak to but ſuch as lived by their labour: but were he in this place, at this day, his exhortation, I doubt not, would be directed eſpecially to the rich and wealthy, to ſuch of you as enjoy the bleſſings of heaven in an uncommon degree. Thoſe who live by their labour are rich and proſperous in compariſon of the poor wretches who move miſerably on crutches, or who want hands to help themſelves; and they owe a tribute to God for the

ſtrength they enjoy of his gift. This is plain from the Apoſtle's rule; and if it is, if even the meaner ſort are indebted to their great Maſter, and muſt pay an acknowledgment out of the little they receive; how much greater are your obligations, who neither toil nor ſpin, and yet are clothed in glory, who neither reap nor gather into barns, and yet are fed in plenty? This is plain. But it is harder to ſay with reſpect to the lower part of mankind, where the obligation to this duty begins; for although ſome who labour may be debtors to charity, yet all are not, becauſe all are not able to anſwer the neceſſities of themſelves and their families by the profit of their work; and ſuch can be under no call to contribute to others. If I may have leave to deliver an opinion in a matter no where clearly determined, I would found it on the advice which St. Paul gives to the Corinthians, that they ſhould lay by in ſtore the firſt day of every week, as God had proſpered them; that is, that ſome part of what remained after a proviſion for the preſent occaſions of themſelves and families, ſhould be reſerved to charity. In this view, all who are in a ſaving way, or who may be ſo with prudent care, are under the obligations of charity; for it is but reaſonable, that we ſhould do good in proportion as we grow rich. Between our own preſent wants, and the preſent wants of others, nature will admit of no compariſon; but when we are able to lay up for ourſelves, it is hardly conſiſtent with the love we owe our brother, to be ſo partial to ourſelves, as to ſuffer the care for our own future wants to ſhut out the conſideration of his preſent miſery. But this matter is left to

every man's diſcretion, in order to prove his love, ſince too ſtrict rules would in great meaſure deſtroy the virtue of charity, the true value of which lies chiefly in this, that it is a free-will offering.

Let us then proceed to the ſecond inquiry, namely, who are duly qualified to receive charity.

I have ſhewed you all things, how that ſo labouring ye ought to ſupport the weak. By the *weak* here we muſt underſtand, ſuch as are not able to labour and work for their own living; for ſince all who can labour are placed on one ſide, and made debtors to charity, the weak, who are placed on the other ſide, and who have a right to be ſupported by charity, muſt be ſuch as are not able to work, or to provide for themſelves in any honeſt calling or employment. This caſe is fully determined by the Apoſtle in his ſecond Epiſtle to the Theſſalonians; *When we were with you*, ſays he, *this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither ſhould he eat. For we hear that there are ſome which walk among you diſorderly, working not at all, but are buſy-bodies. Now them that are ſuch we command and exhort by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that with quietneſs they work, and eat their own bread*, chap. iii. 10, 11, 12. Here you ſee all ſuch as could work excluded from the benefit of charity, and laid under a neceſſity to labour by this injunction; *If they will not work, neither let them eat*; that is, let them not be ſupported in their idleneſs, but be compelled by hunger to do their duty, that they may, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *eat their own bread*, and not become a burden upon the charity of the church.

The general rule then ariſing from theſe apoſtolical precepts ſeems to be this: that ſuch only are due objects of charity, who are through ſickneſs or other infirmity rendered incapable of labour. And yet this rule, if conſtrued to a rigorous ſenſe, will be found inconſiſtent with reaſon and equity; for it may happen, that the man who is moſt able to labour, and who does labour to the utmoſt of his ſtrength and power, may be the moſt pitiable and unexceptionable object of charity: the reaſon is, becauſe a man is not in all caſes able to earn ſo much as the neceſſities of himſelf and family require, and then he muſt either periſh, or be relieved; and his working for his maintenance as much as he can, is ſo far from excluding him, that there cannot be a better plea in his behalf. Where poor families are numerous, and conſiſt moſtly of young children, who can bring in nothing to the common ſtock, by any thing they are capable of doing, this caſe often happens; and the wants of the family exceed all that the diligence and induſtry of the parents can provide.

But though we cannot ſtate the rule of charity ſo as to exclude all who can labour; yet it may ſeem reaſonable perhaps ſo to limit it, as that all who can work ſhould work before they are entitled to any aſſiſtance from others. There is much more equity in this than the other; yet even to require this, in all caſes, would be cruel and inhuman: we know the caſualties that all human things are ſubject to; we have ſeen many reduced to poverty and want, from the moſt flouriſhing and proſperous condition: fire and water, winds and ſtorms, which are

the ſecret miniſters of Providence, cauſe mighty changes in the world, and often place the richeſt upon the ſame level with the pooreſt; and whenever it pleaſes God to ſet ſuch inſtances before us, the tendereſt regard is due to their misfortunes. When you ſee a man fallen under ſuch calamities, one perhaps too who has been a father to the needy and friendleſs, who has relieved hundreds in the days of his proſperity, would you, when the hand of God was upon him, turn aſide from his affliction, and ſay, Go, work for your living? Though indeed, in a reaſonable way of judging, they who have not been inured to labour from their youth, but have had a liberal ingenuous education, may be fairly reckoned in the number of thoſe who are not able to work. The plea of the unjuſt ſteward in the Goſpel, when it was put into the mouth of ſuch an honeſt unfortunate man, has every thing in it to move your pity and compaſſion: *I cannot dig, to beg I am aſhamed.*

Since then there can be hardly any general rule fixed, which will be equally applicable to all caſes, it may be worth our while to examine the reaſon and equity from which this duty flows, which will ſerve to direct us in all the various circumſtances under which the objects of charity preſent themſelves.

Charity is a relative duty, and ſuppoſes the diſtinction of rich and poor, ſince, if there were no ſuch diſtinction, there could be no reaſon aſſigned why any man ſhould part with what he has to another, who is already in as eaſy a fortune and condition as

himſelf. The diſtinction of rich and poor ſuppoſes property; for if all things were in common, and every man had a right to ſerve himſelf at diſcretion out of the heap, one could not be richer than another, but every man would have an equal title to every thing: but then how unequally ſoever the good things of the world are divided, the wants and neceſſities of nature are ſhared in common: the poor are as ſenſible of hunger, and thirſt, and cold, as the rich are; and it cannot be ſuppoſed that God ſent men into the world with ſuch wants and cravings, merely to ſtarve and periſh under them: and yet how ſhall their wants be ſupplied, who have nothing to ſupply them with? Steal they muſt not; for that would be to invade the ſacred law of property, and overturn the order which God has ſettled and appointed: it remains therefore, that they muſt obtain the things they want from the proprietors of the world, in exchange for ſuch ſervices as they are able to perform.

But is this, you will ſay, a ſufficient ſource for the maintenance of the poor? What if thoſe who are in poſſeſſion ſhould refuſe to accept the ſervice of the poor in exchange for their wealth? This would be an hard queſtion, were there not an equal neceſſity on both ſides; had not Providence ſo ordered it, that the rich can no more live without the poor, than the poor without the rich; which being the caſe, the poor, who are able to aſſiſt the rich, can never want a means of ſubſiſtence. How would a rich man differ from a poor one, were he to ſerve himſelf in all the neceſſities of life? What

would ſignify your large tracts of land, were you to plough and ſow with your own hands? What pleaſure or advantage would your numerous flocks yield, were you to ſpin the wool yourſelves, before you could be defended from the winter's froſt? Since then the rich are under a neceſſity of being ſerved by the poor, as much as the poor are of being maintained by the rich, it evidently follows, that the rich have as good a right to require ſervice from the poor, as the poor have to demand maintenance from the rich; and conſequently the rich may as reaſonably withdraw their maintenance, as the poor withdraw their ſervice; which ſhews the equity of the rule in general, *If any man will not work, neither let him eat*; for, in truth, were the poor to be maintained without working, the rich would be in the worſe caſe of the two; but there can be no obligation on the rich to exerciſe a charity, which would deſtroy the very diſtinction of rich and poor; and therefore there can be no obligation on the rich to maintain an idle poverty.

It is evidently then agreeable to reaſon and equity, that the poor, who have ſtrength and ability for labour, ſhould work for their living. Let us in the next place conſider, how the duty of the rich ſtands with reſpect to this ſort of poor.

The right which all men have to maintenance and ſubſiſtence is a ſuperior right to that of property; for the great law of ſelf-preſervation is antecedent to all private laws and poſſeſſions whatever; the conſequence of which is, that in the laſt reſult, the property of the rich is ſubject to the maintenance of the poor. Since then the rich cannot in

reaſon preſerve their property longer than the poor a way of maintenance; and ſince the poor have no other way, ordinarily ſpeaking, but their labour; it follows, that the rich are as much obliged to employ the poor, as the poor are to work for the rich; and one is as much the neceſſary conſequence of the diſtinction between rich and poor, as the other.

As reaſonable as this may ſeem upon the general view, yet it is hard to tell every particular rich man what the meaſure of his duty is in this caſe, or how many poor he ought to employ; but the wiſdom of Providence has in great meaſure ſuperſeded this difficulty; for a rich man cannot enjoy his eſtate, cannot live anſwerably to his fortune and condition, without creating a great deal of work, for the ſupport and encouragement of the poor. The gayeſt of their attire comes through the hands of the poor; and he that makes a fine garment for you, will earn a coarſe one at leaſt for himſelf; he that ſearches the ſeas and woods to furniſh dainties to your table, ſupplies his own at the ſame time with wholeſome, though leſs delicious fare. Every man therefore, who lives anſwerably to his condition, does his part in furniſhing the poor with work and maintenance: and in this method the poor receive ſupport from the rich in proportion to the different degrees of their wealth; for if all live ſuitably to their condition, every man will furniſh work to the induſtrious in proportion to his fortune.

Upon this view of the world, you may judge what real iniquity there is in the temper and practice of the covetous penurious miſer: that he de-

nies himſelf the comforts and enjoyments of life, is the leaſt part of his crime; for whilſt he pinches himſelf, he ſtarves the poor; and, by living like a beggar in the midſt of plenty, he withdraws from the needy and induſtrious that maintenance which God has appointed for them. Human laws have provided no remedy for this evil, nor indeed can they; but it may one day perhaps be found as criminal to rob the poor of their work, as to rob the rich of their poſſeſſions. Nay, this oppreſſion often meets with its reward in the ſecond or third generation, even in this world. It is common to ſee the miſer's ſon or grandſon ſquander the wealth of his anceſtor with the utmoſt folly and profuſeneſs: and when we behold ſuch inſtances, can we help thinking, that the providence of God is uſing the extravagance of the ſon, to do juſtice to the poor, who were injured and oppreſſed by the penury of the father? For whatever miſchief extravagancy may do to private men and families, yet this good at leaſt flows from it, that the ſame extravagance, which is the undoing of a vain rich man, often makes way for the advancement of many an induſtrious poor one; or is at leaſt, for the time it laſts, a new fund of work thrown into the maintenance of the needy.

Whenever this ordinary method of ſupporting the poor fails, the providing for them is a debt lying over the poſſeſſions of the rich, as a neceſſary condition of that law which ſecures them in their property, by making it penal for the poor to diſpoſſeſs them by force or violence. And this ſhews the reaſonableneſs of our own law, which has ſub-

jected all the eſtates and fortunes of the kingdom to the maintenance of the poor, in defect of other means; which is not a new burden laid on private property by the mere ſtrength of an arbitrary law, but is the voice of reaſon and nature, acknowledged and enforced by the wiſdom and power of the legiſlature.

You ſee then how the duties ariſing from the diſtinction of rich and poor ſtand upon the foot of natural reaſon and equity.

The Goſpel, though it has left men in poſſeſſion of their ancient rights, yet has it enlarged the duties of love and compaſſion; and taught rich men to conſider the poor, not only as ſervants, but as brethren; and to look upon themſelves not only as the maſters, but as the patrons and protectors of the needy. Upon this view, the induſtrious poor are entitled to the rich man's charity; ſince in the candour of the Goſpel, we ought to aſſiſt our poor neighbours, not only to live, but to live comfortably: and an honeſt laborious poverty has charms in it to draw relief from any rich man, who has the heart of a Chriſtian, or even the bowels of nature. Mean families, though perhaps they may ſubſiſt by their work, yet go through much ſorrow to earn their bread; if they complain not, they are more worthy of regard; their ſilent ſuffering, and their contented reſignation to Providence, entitle them to the more compaſſion; and there is a pleaſure not to be deſcribed in words, which the rich man enjoys, when he makes glad the hearts of ſuch patient ſufferers; and, by his liberality, makes them for a time forget their poverty and diſtreſs; that even

with reſpect to the preſent enjoyments, the words of the text are verified; *It is more bleſſed to give than to receive.*

But, to ſpeak of the duty ſtrictly, charity muſt begin where the maintenance of the poor fails; for whenever it becomes impoſſible for them to provide for themſelves, it becomes the duty of others to provide for them. Now work being the maintenance of the poor, it is evident, that whenever their work fails, they become objects of charity: and this happens many ways; ſometimes it happens for want of employment; and whenever it does, it is a noble inſtance of charity to furniſh work for ſuch uſeful hands. It is a charity which the rich may make ſubſervient either to their pleaſure or their profit; and be it either profit or pleaſure which accrues to the rich man, as it ariſes from charity, it will bring a bleſſing along with it; and look, whatſoever he doth, it ſhall proſper.

Sometimes their want ariſes from idleneſs, which is generally attended with great corruption of morals. When this is the caſe, it is a kindneſs, rather than a puniſhment, to inure them to labour by wholeſome diſcipline: for work being the poor man's maintenance, idleneſs in him is the ſame thing as extravagance in the rich; one deſtroys the ſubſtance of the poor as effectually as the other does the ſubſtance of the rich.

That the young and the old, whoſe years render them incapable of taking care of themſelves; that the impotent and lame, who have not only the neceſſities, but the miſeries of life to ſtruggle with;

that the diſeaſed in body and mind, who want either ſtrength or reaſon to direct it to any uſeful purpoſes, are all fit objects of Chriſtian charity and compaſſion, is too well known to be inſiſted on. Theſe calamities, which are incident to human life, and are not always the conſequences of vice and immorality, but come either in the courſe of nature, or are ſent by the ſecret diſpoſition of the Almighty, what are they, but the voice of Providence, the hand of God demanding charity?

To direct you to the proper methods of charity, in regard to the ſeveral objects deſcribed, that the offering of an honeſt heart may not be loſt through miſapplication, would be an uſeful, were it a neceſſary part of this day's work: but behold, theſe objects are all before you, and the reports now to be read of the charitable inſtitutions of this ancient and worthy city, will ſhew you in what hands you may ſafely truſt whatever your heart inclines you to offer to God for the relief of the miſerable.

Here the report was read.

You have had now the ſtate of theſe charities ſet before you; you ſee how uſefully their revenue is applied, and yet how ſhort it falls of the ſeveral occaſions. It remains on my part, that, for the encouragement of your liberality, I ſhould ſpeak to the laſt thing propoſed, namely,

What is the bleſſing and reward attending on the faithful diſcharge of this duty: *It is more bleſſed to give than to receive.*

The time already ſpent admoniſhes me to be ſhort. In a word then: if you compare the conditions into which men are divided, and the ſeveral

duties; if you conſider the obligation the rich are under to aſſiſt the needy, and compare it with the much harder obligation the poor are under to toil for a mean livelihood; you will have reaſon to bleſs God, who has placed you on the happier ſide, and to comply with the duty of your ſtation with all thankfulneſs to the Almighty, and to acknowledge, that he has choſen for you the better part; and if you diſcharge the duties proper to your condition, you may have this comfort added to it, it ſhall not be taken from you.

2dly, In regard to the preſent pleaſure and ſatisfaction attending upon works of charity, the giver has in all reſpects a better ſhare than the receiver. The poor man has a preſent comfort in the relief of charity; it is eaſe to his ſuffering, and it is an encouragement to ſee that his poverty is not deſpiſed by his richer neighbours, who are ſo compaſſionate, as to come to the ſupport and aſſiſtance of it. But what is this to the joy of giving eaſe and comfort to the oppreſſed; it is a godlike virtue to do good, and the pleaſure of it has ſomething in it ſo divine, that words cannot expreſs. To *be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, to be a father to the poor*, and a defender of all under oppreſſion, are characters which bear ſome reſemblance to the prerogatives of the Almighty, and are the nobleſt efforts of a rational mind, aſpiring to be like its great Creator.

3dly, If we look beyond this preſent ſcene, the difference is wider. There is no virtue in being relieved; a poor man is not a better man for the charity he receives; it brings with it an increaſe of

duty, and calls upon him for a more ſure truſt on God, for greater thankfulneſs to him; and ſome obligations it lays him under, with reſpect to his benefactors here. And it may happen, that the charity, which is his preſent relief, may be a burden upon his future account; and will be ſo, if he miſapplies the gift. But the giver has a better proſpect before him; charity is the diſcharge of a duty, and has the general promiſes of obedience; it is a virtue likewiſe diſtinguiſhed from the reſt, and has its own reward; the bleſſings of the life which is, and of that which is to come: it is a debt which God will own at the laſt day; it is a treaſure tranſferred to heaven, and will be repaid in never failing riches. To conclude, charity is a double maintenance; it gives temporal life to the poor, and ſpiritual life to the rich: it beſtows the comforts of this world on the receiver, and the glories of immortality on the giver.

DISCOURSE IX.

MATT. xviii. 29, 30.

d his fellow-ſervant fell down at his feet, and beſought him, ſaying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

d he would not; but went and caſt him into priſon, till he ſhould pay the debt.

VHEN we conſider the various calamities and ſtreſſes under which many perſons and families la-ur, and their utter inability to ſupport themſelves ıder theſe evils, it is ſome alleviation to obſerve th what diligence and application Chriſtian cha-y has been at work to find proper methods for e comfort and ſupport of ſuch as are in miſery d affliction.

This thought ariſes naturally from the buſineſs of is day. And ſurely, this great and worthy city :ver appears more honourable in the ſight of God ıd man, than when aſſembled for the ſake and on ıe behalf of thoſe, who have nothing to plead for em but their miſery; and nothing to return but ıeir prayers.

As the charitable inſtitutions under your direction ıd government have no uſe of riches or poſſeſſions

but for the ſupply of the needy; the true way of eſtimating their condition is, to conſider the proportion which their revenues bear to the neceſſities of thoſe who ſtand in need of their aſſiſtance. If the poor thrive and grow able to ſupport themſelves, the hoſpitals grow rich in proportion; if the poor and their wants increaſe, the hoſpitals themſelves grow poor, and become the object of every Chriſtian's charity.

From hence it is evident, that whoever, by any methods of oppreſſion or cruelty, adds to the number of the poor and miſerable, does as truly act in oppoſition to theſe charitable foundations, and the end for which they are inſtituted, as if he took from them their poſſeſſions. For whether you increaſe their burden, or leſſen their maintenance, it is the ſame thing.

There are few who will ſuſpect themſelves to be chargeable with any deſign againſt theſe charities; and there are, I believe, few indeed, who have any formed deſign againſt them. But if you conſider the caſe in the view now opened to you, it may appear, perhaps, that there are many who act daily in oppoſition to this good work, increaſing that burden, which is already almoſt inſupportable.

There are many ways which men practiſe in oppreſſing the poor, which might properly fall under this conſideration; but I ſhall confine myſelf to that ſingle inſtance, to which the text relates, the hardheartedneſs and cruelty which men uſe towards their poor inſolvent debtors. And I the rather chooſe to ſpeak to this caſe, becauſe men are apt to imagine that conſcience has nothing to do in it,

and that they are ſecure from any guilt, ſo long as they follow in a legal manner the method preſcribed by the law. Perhaps too, for a like reaſon, this iniquity has been leſs reproved than it deſerves by the preacher; for fear he ſhould be thought to condemn the law of his country.

I have no ſuch fear; nor do I mean to condemn the law of my country, or to charge it with the cruelty of thoſe who abuſe it. If the law itſelf is ſevere, the more reaſon there is to be cautious in the uſe of it: but if men will turn the law, which was given them for the ſecurity of their property, into an inſtrument of oppreſſion and revenge, the law is free, but they are guilty. And, without doubt, there have been many legal proceedings in courts of juſtice, which, when they come to be re-examined in a higher court, the judge and the jury ſhall be praiſed for executing the law faithfully, and yet the proſecutor condemned for violence and oppreſſion.

There is a plain difference between the laws made for the public good and ſafety, and thoſe introduced in favour of private perſons; only with reſpect to the firſt-mentioned laws, it is often criminal to conceal offences committed againſt them, or to compound for them with the offenders. To conceal treaſon is an offence of a very high nature; for every man is concerned in the life and welfare of the King, and bound to defend him. To compound with thieves and robbers is criminal, for this plain reaſon among others, that whoever treats with a thief for his impunity, treats for a greater intereſt than he has a right to diſpoſe of; for every man has

an intereſt in bringing ſuch offenders to juſtice: and therefore no man can remit the penalty, but he who has a right to act for the public, that is, the King only.

But as to the laws introduced for the ſake of private rights and properties, the caſe is otherwiſe. For as every man may diſpoſe of his own rights and properties as he thinks fit, ſo he is at liberty to uſe the methods which the law has provided for the recovery of his rights, or not to uſe them, as he pleaſes. In all theſe caſes therefore the law provides the remedy, and leaves the uſe of it to the conſcience of the party concerned.

Since then men are to be governed by the rules of reaſon and conſcience, in the legal proſecution of their own rights; I deſire you to conſider with me, what it is that reaſon and conſcience and Chriſtian charity require of us in the caſe now under conſideration.

The words of the text are part of one of our Saviour's parables. They do not contain an hiſtorical account of a fact, ſuppoſed to have happened juſt as it is related: but here is a caſe ſtated by our bleſſed Lord, with ſuch circumſtances as he thought proper to ſupport the inference to be drawn from it; and therefore the circumſtances are to be conſidered as neceſſary ingredients in the judgment, which he makes upon this caſe. Obſerve then,

Firſt, Here is a debt ſuppoſed to be juſtly due. The poor man owed his fellow-ſervant an hundred pence.

Secondly, When the debt is demanded, he does

not deny it, or refuſe to pay it, but deſires forbearance only, till he could by his labour and induſtry raiſe enough to diſcharge the debt.

Thirdly, He aſks even this as a favour, and with great ſubmiſſion: he fell down at his fellow-ſervant's feet, and beſought him. On the contrary,

Fourthly, The creditor comes with inſolence and violence to demand his debt. *He laid hands on his fellow-ſervant*, and *took him by the throat, ſaying, Pay me that thou oweſt.* And when the poor man beſought him to have patience, he regarded him not, but hurried him away to priſon; and for this behaviour he is called, ver. 32. *Thou wicked ſervant.*

Some of theſe circumſtances ſeem to be added, to aggravate the cruelty of this wicked ſervant; ſuch are they which deſcribe the violence uſed on one ſide, and the ſubmiſſion and intreaty offered on the other. And the caſe commonly falls out to be ſo. Men are apt to demand their debts, eſpecially from their equals or inferiors, with a haughtineſs and roughneſs hard to be borne; and yet the poor debtor is forced by neceſſity to take it patiently, and to be all ſubmiſſion.

But the circumſtances, upon which the reaſon of the caſe depends, are principally theſe two: Firſt, That the debtor was not able to diſcharge the debt at the time of the demand. Secondly, That he was willing to do juſtice to his creditor, and to endeavour, by the beſt means he could uſe, to raiſe a ſum ſufficient to anſwer the demand. Therefore where either of theſe circumſtances are wanting, the reaſon of the caſe ceaſes, and together with it all pleas for forbearance and compaſſion. Conſe-

quently every man is at liberty, in point of conſcience, to uſe the method which the law of his country directs; to compel thoſe to pay their debts, who are able, but not willing to pay them. And in truth, where this is the caſe, the creditor is ſo far from being juſtly chargeable with cruelty or oppreſſion in making uſe of any legal method to recover his own, that the charge lies ſtrongly againſt the other ſide. To delay poor traders, or others, in the payment of what is due to them, is always injuſtice, and ſometimes very barbarous injuſtice. A poor man may perhaps loſe his credit, which is the life of his buſineſs, or perhaps his liberty, which is the life and maintenance of himſelf and family, for want of that very money which you detain from him: and when this happens, is it any compenſation to pay the man at laſt what is owing to him? So far from it, that ſuch a debtor, even when his debt is paid, may ſtand charged in conſcience with the ruin of a poor family.

Another circumſtance, upon which the judgment of our Saviour in this caſe depends, is, that there be a readineſs and willingneſs in the debtor to do juſtice whenever he is able, and to uſe his beſt endeavours to enable himſelf to do it. Conſequently all ſuch debtors are out of this caſe, who deny their juſt debts, or any part of them; and all ſuch as may be juſtly ſuſpected to conceal their effects, in order to defraud their creditors: and ſuch alſo as live idly and profuſely, ſquandering the eſtate which ought to be applied to do juſtice to thoſe to whom it is due. The reaſon of theſe exceptions may be made plain in few words. The preſent inability of

a debtor is the argument for the delay and the forbearance; but this inability comes not into queſtion where the debt itſelf is denied. And ſince the circumſtances of men change ſo faſt as they do, the man who wants forbearance this year, may in a few more be better able to pay the debt, than the other is to forgive it: and what reaſon can be given why he ſhould not? Now he who denies the debt, declares an intention never to pay it; which certainly will juſtify the other, in endeavouring by a legal method to maintain and aſcertain his right; and till the right is cleared, there is no room for one ſide to plead, or the other ſide to conſider the arguments for pity and compaſſion.

The ſecond exception relates to a caſe which is ſo manifeſtly fraudulent, that nothing can be ſaid in its excuſe. They who conceal their effects, and plead poverty deceitfully, are mere cheats, and deſerve no compaſſion. To prevent ſuch frauds, and to arm the creditor with power to compel a diſcovery, ſeems to me to be the chief view and deſign of the law, which puts the body of the debtor into the creditor's power: and ſo odious is this deceit, that the law, in ſome caſes and circumſtances, has annexed to it a far greater penalty.

The third exception relates to thoſe, who oftentimes are free enough of their promiſes to do juſtice, and yet by their actions declare daily, that they have nothing leſs at heart than to do juſtly by their creditors. Such are they who live idly and profuſely, and are conſtantly diminiſhing what they have, and by ſo doing are rendering themſelves leſs able every day to pay their juſt debts. Now, what

reaſon can you imagine, that is proper to be laid before an honeſt induſtrious man, to perſuade him to be content that his own family ſhould ſuffer, and his ſubſtance be waſted by the folly and extravagance of a ſtranger? Such a man would certainly puniſh and reſtrain a ſon of his own, were he idle and extravagant; and what kind of goodneſs or charity is it, to maintain and ſupport the like extravagance in another? Some wiſe commonwealths have debarred ſuch perſons from the management of their own eſtates: I am ſure there is more reaſon to debar them from ſpending the eſtates of other men; and this is what every extravagant man does, whilſt he conſumes his ſubſtance, and leaves his debts unpaid.

In theſe caſes, therefore, and in others of the like nature, every good man may, and every wiſe man will, make uſe (in a reaſonable manner) of the power which the law gives him for the ſecurity of his property; and in ſo doing he ſtands clear of all offence againſt charity and good conſcience.

But when the circumſtances mentioned in the text meet together; when the debtor is chargeable with no fault or fraud, but is diſabled by mere poverty to ſatisfy his debts; to uſe the extremity of the law againſt ſuch a man is not only cruel and inhuman, but, as far as I can judge, contrary to the true meaning and deſign of the law itſelf. For the law which gives power over the body of the debtor, is not a criminal law, ordained for the puniſhment of offenders; but is a law made to ſecure men in their properties, and to guard them againſt the arts and contrivances of ſuch as would injure them in

their juſt demands. To uſe the law therefore, where it cannot poſſibly have any effect towards ſecuring your property, but can ſerve only to haraſs and torment a poor unfortunate man, is perverting the law, and making it ſubſervient to purpoſes very different from thoſe, for the ſake of which it was ordained. The law does not entruſt private men with the execution, or relaxation of its penalties for crimes and offences; but in the preſent caſe, every man may impriſon, or releaſe from priſon, his debtor, as he pleaſes; a plain evidence that this law was meant as a defence of private rights, and not as a puniſhment for criminals.

Is it then a general rule, that the law can never with good conſcience be executed againſt inſolvent debtors? There may poſſibly be exceptions, and more than I can foreſee; but I think they muſt all be attended with this circumſtance, that there be a proſpect of recovering the debt, though the debtor himſelf be inſolvent. It may ſo happen, that he who has nothing of his own, may have wealthy friends and relations; and though friends are not often willing, for the ſake of juſtice, to pay the debts of a relation, yet, for the honour of the family, or out of perſonal regard to the relation, they will pay the money as the price of his redemption from a gaol. Many caſes may be imagined, where a rich relation ought in reaſon to pay the debt, rather than the poor creditor to loſe it. In ſuch caſes, there may be a reaſon to juſtify or excuſe the proceeding.

Some think that no ſeverity is too great to be uſed towards ſuch as have ſpent their eſtates riot-

ouſly, to the injury of their creditors. And indeed little is to be ſaid in behalf of ſuch perſons. Yet ſtill it is worth conſidering, whether you would chooſe to be judge and executioner in your own cauſe. And if the caſe be really ſo deſperate, that you can aim at nothing by the execution of the law, but the puniſhment of the man who has wronged you, I am ſure it is the ſafer way to leave the puniſhment to him, who has ſaid, *Vengeance is mine, and I will repay.*

But the caſe, which I have principally in view, ſtands clear of theſe exceptions. The unfortunate perſons, with whom the gaols are crowded, are, for the moſt part, ſuch as have neither money nor friends to aſſiſt them; ſuch as have fallen into poverty by misfortunes, by a decay in their buſineſs, or perhaps by the largeneſs of a family, which their utmoſt diligence could not ſupport. Were they at liberty, they might probably be of uſe to themſelves, and their poor families, and alſo to their creditors, by following their honeſt callings and employments. But now their ſtrength conſumes in vain, they ſtarve in priſon, and their children out of it, or are thrown upon the pariſh for a miſerable maintenance; and no benefit or advantage accrues, or can poſſibly accrue, to the perſon who confines them.

Men are often urged to deal thus ſeverely with others, by the grief and anguiſh which attend the diſappointment they meet with in their juſt expectation; and being themſelves ſufferers, they think no treatment too bad for thoſe to whom they impute their own diſtreſs. But could men conſider calmly how much miſery they bring into the world,

and how many muſt partake in the ſad effects of their reſentment, I am perſuaded that humanity and compaſſion, virtues to which this country never was a ſtranger, would in great meaſure prevent this evil.

When the father of a poor family, who have nothing to depend on for their ſubſiſtence but his labour and induſtry, is torn from them, what can the poor widow and orphans do? For a widow *ſhe is*, and orphans *they are*, to all the intents and purpoſes of ſorrow and affliction. It is well if they take no worſe employment than begging; oftentimes they are tempted to pilfer or ſteal, or to proſtitute themſelves for bread; and happy is it for them, if they meet with no worſe fortune, than to fall into your hands to be corrected and reformed.

In the mean time the wretched father ſees himſelf undone, and his family diſperſed and ruined. His ſpirits ſink under ſorrow, and deſpair eats out his ſtrength and life; that ſhould you in time relent and releaſe him, it is ten to one but the relief comes too late. He is no longer the ſame man; before his impriſonment he was active and ſtrong, and had ſpirit to go through his labour; now he is broken in mind and body, and not able to improve to any advantage that liberty, which at laſt you are willing to allow him.

Would not any one, who conſiders this, be apt to imagine, that no man lies in priſon but for ſome great debt; that it is impoſſible that any one ſhould uſe another thus cruelly for a trifle? And yet, in truth, the caſe is quite otherwiſe: there are few, in compariſon, who lie for great ſums; the far greater

number are confined for trifles, for ſuch ſums as muſt be reckoned by pence, and not by pounds. It is true, they are commonly confined at the ſuit of thoſe, who are almoſt as poor as themſelves; and the poverty on the one ſide is often urged as a juſtification of the ſeverity uſed againſt the other. But alas! what relief is it to one poor man to undo another? What comfort is it to torment a wretch, whoſe miſery can yield you no profit or advantage?

Whether I have juſtly repreſented the conſequences of this caſe, or no, you, who have the poor orphans of this city under your care; and you, whoſe charitable work it is to correct and reform the vicious and profligate; are beſt able to ſay: for you know all the diſtreſſes of the poor, and the cauſes from whence they ſpring. And, to your honour I ſpeak it, you have provided for every evil of life a proper remedy, or a proper comfort. But I need not be your orator; your own deeds will ſpeak for you far better than I can. The report now to be read will ſhew both the nature and the good management of the ſeveral charities under your direction.

Here the report was read.

The account now laid before you is capable of raiſing very different ſentiments in the heart of a Chriſtian. It is a melancholy thing to hear the poor orphans in one place, the profligate vagrants in another, the lame and impotent in a third, and the diſtempered in mind in a fourth, reckoned up by hundreds and by thouſands. To what miſeries is human life expoſed!

But ſtill, in the midſt of theſe calamities, there is eaſon to bleſs and adore the goodneſs of God, who ıas put it into the hearts of his ſervants to provide omfort and relief for theſe ſons and daughters of ffliction.

The richeſt among us, when he views theſe miſortunes, ſees nothing but what he is liable to himelf. Examine the condition of theſe orphans, nany of them perhaps born in the midſt of plenty, hough now they live on charity. There was a ime perhaps when *their* fathers as little thought hey ſhould be beholden to an hoſpital for the naintenance of their children, as we may think it t this day.

Other calamities make no diſtinction between ich and poor; we have no inheritance in the uſe of ur limbs and ſenſes, but enjoy them by the good leaſure of him who gave them. And whenever heſe misfortunes overtake us, our riches make but ittle difference in the caſe; a rich diſtracted man, nd a poor diſtracted man, are very near upon an quality; and as far as the power of imagination oes, they often change conditions; the poor man ancying himſelf to be a prince, whilſt the rich one ines and torments himſelf with the all-fears and nxieties of poverty.

Since then you are ſo nearly related to all the miieries now placed within your view, need I ſay much o move tenderneſs and compaſſion towards a caſe aleady ſo much your own? This is a cauſe which nature will plead for in every heart not made of ſtone. But there is one ſtill greater Advocate to plead this auſe, even he who died for our ſins, and roſe again

for our juſtification. Theſe orphans, theſe diſeaſed in body or in mind, nay, even the profligate wretches who are brought to you for puniſhment and correction, are his care; and whatever charity you beſtow on them, he will reckon it as done to himſelf, and acknowledge it in the ſight of men and of angels, when he ſhall come again to judge the world in righteouſneſs.

DISCOURSE X.

MARK iii. 24.

If a kingdom be divided againſt itſelf, that kingdom cannot ſtand.

THOUGH theſe words are read in the Goſpel, yet they have not their authority merely from thence; but for the truth of the obſervation contained in them, there lies an appeal to common ſenſe and experience. Our Saviour indeed, by uſing this maxim, has approved it; and he could not appeal to the judgment of all men in this caſe, without, at the ſame time, declaring his own.

As obſervations of this kind depend on a great number of facts; ſo are there in the preſent caſe a great number to ſupport it. The many kingdoms and countries weakened or ruined by inteſtine diviſions, are ſo many proofs upon record of the truth of this aſſertion. And did we of this country want to have this truth cleared by ſuch inſtances, it would be but reaſonable to produce the proofs. But we have examples of our own growth, and ſtand in need of no aſſiſtance from foreign hiſtory. This iſland has often changed its inhabitants; but the new ones never got poſſeſſion till the old ones

made way for them, by their mutual hatred and animoſities; and the nation has, under very unpromiſing circumſtances, maintained itſelf againſt foreign enemies, whenever it was ſo happy as to preſerve peace and tranquillity at home.

The late unhappy times of Charles the Firſt were attended with this almoſt peculiar felicity, that no foreign nation was at leiſure to take advantage of our diviſions. Europe was in arms; and the great powers too much in awe of each other, for any one to conceive hopes of ſucceſs, had his ambition inclined him to lay hold of the opportunities, which our diſtractions offered. But though there was no enemy to ruin us, yet ruined we were. Such is the malignity of inteſtine diviſion!

When national quarrels grow extreme, and appear in arms, it is eaſy to foreſee the ſad conſequences; and the coldeſt imagination may be able to paint to itſelf the miſeries that muſt follow. And whoever looks back upon the many years of diſtreſs, under which this country laboured in the late times; let him view them with impartial, or with partial eye; will ſee enough to convince his judgment, how fatal a thing it is for a kingdom to be divided againſt itſelf. It will therefore be of little uſe to enlarge on this part of the argument; and I the more willingly paſs it over, as it will ſave you and me the pain of viewing various ſcenes of woe, which that time, fruitful in miſery, would preſent before us.

But there are other evils, leſs diſcernible, which ſpring from the ſame bitter root, and naturally prepare the way for the greater miſchiefs to follow after: they are the firſt ſymptoms of public confu-

ſion; and as they influence greatly the virtue and morality of a nation, they are in a more eſpecial manner the preacher's care.

National diviſions are ſometimes founded in material differences, ſuch as affect the well-being and conſtitution of a government; and ſometimes owe their riſe to accidents, and trifles unworthy of the concern of the public. In this reſpect therefore every caſe muſt ſtand on its own bottom, and is ſubject to no general obſervation. But all diviſions, how different ſoever in their commencement, grow in their progreſs to be ſo much alike; partly from the common depravity of men, who have not virtue enough to act honeſtly in an honeſt cauſe; partly from the cunning of deſigning men, who ſeldom want the art to direct the public diſpute to the ſervice of their private views; that there are evil effects which may be generally aſcribed to all diviſions, as the fruit which they naturally produce.

I. The zeal and warmth which attend public quarrels, are apt to get poſſeſſion of men's minds and affections ſo far, as to render them in great meaſure unable to form a right judgment of things and perſons.

Without a right judgment in theſe reſpects, it is impoſſible for men to be of any ſervice to their country. For a foundation for public good can never be laid in a wrong judgment of things and perſons. And yet, when contentions run high, ſo hard is it, even for the cooleſt heads, to form right judgments, that it is hardly poſſible for them to get right information in any thing: the very language of the country is perverted by the zeal of parties;

honour and honeſty are words which loſe their natural meaning, and become merely relative to the notions of him who uſes them; and when a perſon is repreſented to us under theſe fair and engaging characters, nothing can be certainly concluded, but that the man ſo highly praiſed, and his orator, are both of a ſide.

With as little juſtice are terms of reproach dealt about, though commonly with a more liberal hand, as the reſentments of anger and contempt are uſually keener and more active than thoſe of love and eſteem. Men of diſcernment on all ſides ſee the folly and iniquity of this practice; yet they carry on the work, without giving credit to themſelves, for the ſake of the multitude, who are greatly influenced, and often prepared for miſchief, by theſe devices. If we look into the large liſt of malignants, delinquents, and perſons ſuſpected, or perhaps without ſuſpicion, charged as Papiſts, in the late times, we ſhall find among them ſome of the wiſeſt and beſt of the nation; who, could they have had the influence in public affairs which their worth and merit entitled them to, would have ſaved both their king and their country from oppreſſion. But theſe men were made uſeleſs: and in like circumſtances the beſt men will always be ſo; for it muſt ever be their choice rather to ſink under ſuch artifices, than to thrive by the uſe of them; and the times leave them no other choice.

As it is with perſons, ſo it is with things. To ſee how obſtinately and perverſely men approve or diſapprove almoſt every thing by the vitiated taſte of party, one would think that truth and reaſon had

left the world, or that men were univerſally fallen blind. But neither have truth and reaſon left the world, nor are men otherwiſe than wilfully blind. But when the appeal is made, as in popular caſes it is, to the multitude, the leaders find it much eaſier to direct their paſſions, than their underſtandings. And what reaſon is there to expect, that men ſhould take the direction of their own eyes, when they refer themſelves to the opinion and approbation of thoſe who have none?

This blind attachment to things and perſons tends gradually to deſtroy the very notions of right and wrong, and to render virtue and common honeſty of little or no ſignificancy in public affairs. The lower part of the world ſoon grows to be inſenſible of the difference; and by an habit of following a falſe rule of judging, they become incapable of making uſe of the true one. And when deſigning men obſerve, that by doing right they cannot pleaſe their adverſaries, by doing wrong they cannot offend their friends, they will ſoon diſregard a diſtinction, of ſo little uſe either to their intereſt or reputation. And hence proceeds that hardneſs of mind, which no reaſon, no conviction can ſubdue.

How fatal an influence this muſt have upon the virtue and morality of any people, will appear by following this evil a few ſteps further into ſome of its natural and obvious conſequences.

II. One great guard to virtue, and placed in the minds of men by the hand that formed them, is the ſenſe of ſhame when we do ill; of the ſame kind, and a twin of the ſame birth, is the pleaſure ariſing from the praiſe of having done well. When men,

through the corruptneſs of their own hearts, get rid of theſe natural impreſſions, they are, in the opinion of the world, profligate and abandoned. Of this kind the inſtances are but few. But then, to make their natural paſſions of any ſervice to us, they muſt be kept true to their proper objects, good and evil; and whenever the judgment is ſo corrupted as to loſe ſight of this difference, the love of praiſe and the fear of ſhame will become not merely uſeleſs, but miſchievous and deſtructive. And this muſt be the caſe, whenever a falſe ſtandard of reputation is ſet up. And when a nation or kingdom is divided, honour and reputation will be dealt out by a falſe meaſure, and fall to their ſhare, who are beſt able, or moſt forward, to ſerve and promote the meaſures of the intemperate zeal, which poſſeſſes the one or the other part of the diviſion. Thus true honour and virtue are robbed of their natural forces; and the ſenſe of ſhame and of praiſe are ſeduced into the ſervice of a faction; and ſo far perverted, as oftentimes to prove motives to actions baſe and diſhonourable.

III. When praiſe and reproaches are diſtributed with ſo little juſtice, it has another very ill effect in hardening men againſt reproach, even when they deſerve it moſt. Reproach, when it falls indiſcriminately on the beſt and the worſt, loſes its proper effect; and bad men will take advantage of the ill judgment of the world in abuſing the beſt, to deſpiſe all cenſure, how juſtly ſoever paſſed on themſelves. This will by degrees make men inſenſible of the pleaſure of doing brave and generous actions for the good of their country; they will grow

ſteeled and obdurate in their minds, and, with a profligate contempt of the opinion of the world, enter calmly and without remorſe into any miſchief, to which intereſt, revenge, or any other mean paſſion, ſhall invite them.

IV. It is a farther aggravation of this evil, to conſider, that this infamous conduct ſeldom fails of being ſucceſsful. When the malignity of inteſtine diviſion is far ſpread, it becomes a ſhelter for all iniquity. Party zeal uſurps the place of Chriſtian charity, and covers a multitude of ſins. And when once men find that there is ſo ſhort a way to credit and eſteem, they will be tempted, through lazineſs, and a natural depravity, which will be ever ready to lay hold on ſuch encouragement, to decline the honourable and laborious methods of riſing to reputation in the world, and to truſt their hopes and their fortunes to the merit of their zeal; which hopes ſeldom fail them. For,

V. As credit and reputation, the natural rewards of virtue, are perverted and miſapplied by the blind ſpirit of diviſion; ſo are the rewards which the public has provided and deſtined to the encouragement of true merit, diverted into a wrong channel: the worthieſt are often driven into obſcurity, and others called into employments and preferments, in which they can do themſelves no honour, their country no ſervice.

There is not a place in church or ſtate of ſo mean a conſideration, but that the public has an intereſt in having it ſupplied by a proper, and, in proportion to the duty of the office, an able man.

When this is the caſe, the work of government is carried on regularly and ſteadily, and the influence of it are duly communicated, and felt in every part: as the blood, which moves from the heart, cheriſhes and warms the extreme parts of the body, as long as the little veſſels which convey it are in due order: but if theſe ſmall channels are obſtructed, or loſe their proper tone, coldneſs and numbneſs will enſue, and ſometimes greater evils, not to be borne, nor to be cured but by the loſs of a limb.

Theſe are the ſteps by which diviſion corrupts the manners and morality of a nation. And what hopes are there of ſeeing a people grow great and conſiderable, who have loſt not only the ſenſe of virtue, but even the ſenſe of ſhame; who call evil good, and good evil; and are prepared to ſacrifice their reaſon, their true intereſt, the peace and proſperity of their country, to their own and their leaders' reſentments? Can it be expected that men ſhould form themſelves by a virtuous and laborious courſe of life for the ſervice of a country, where real worth and merit are ſo far out of conſideration, that the affections and regards of the people are tied, like the favour of the Roman circus, to the colour of the coat which diſtinguiſhes their faction.

Theſe general obſervations, which I have laid before you, might be juſtified by numberleſs inſtances, drawn from the hiſtory of the late times; but perhaps they may weigh more ſtanding ſingle by themſelves, than being coupled with facts, in which the paſſions of the preſent age are not unconcerned.

And ſufficient they are of themſelves to warn all honeſt men how they begin to foment the diviſions of their country.

But yet, to do juſtice to my ſubject, and the ſolemn occaſion of this day, it is neceſſary to take one ſtep into the hiſtory of former times, and to view the works of diviſion in its utmoſt rage.

I am ſenſible how difficult it is to ſpeak of any thing relating to that unhappy time which this day calls to mind; and how hardly truth can be borne on any ſide: yet ſhall not this diſcourage me from bearing my teſtimony againſt the unnatural and barbarous treaſon of this day, and the acts of violence which prepared the way for it: a treaſon long ſince condemned by the public voice of the nation, in the moſt ſolemn acts of Church and State.

I ſhall go on therefore to illuſtrate my ſubject by ſome examples, which the hiſtory of the late times affords, and which will reach to the full extent of the obſervation of my text, that a *kingdom divided againſt itſelf cannot ſtand.*

To put a ſtop to innovations, to correct the errors or abuſes in government, to redreſs the grievances of the people by the known rules of parliament, is the true and ancient method of preſerving the conſtitution, and tranſmitting it ſafe with all its advantages to poſterity. But when this wholeſome phyſic came to be adminiſtered, as at length it did, by the ſpirit of faction and diviſion, it was ſo intemperately given, that the remedy inflamed the diſtemper; and the unhappy conteſt, which began about the rights of the King, and the liberties

of the people, ended fatally in the deſtruction of both.

The conteſt about civil rights was rendered exceeding hot and fierce, by having all the diſputes and quarrels in religious matters, under which the nation had long ſuffered, incorporated with it. By this means conſcience was called in, to animate and inflame the popular reſentments. The effect was ſoon felt: the Church of England, which had long been the glory and the bulwark of the Reformation, fell the firſt ſacrifice; and many who had ſerved long and faithfully at her altars, were driven out to ſeek their bread in deſolate places. What came in the room of the Church ſo deſtroyed, time would fail me, ſhould I pretend to recount; ſo many and ſo various were the forms of religion, which aroſe out of the imaginations of men ſet free from government.

The biſhops of thoſe days were generally inclined to ſave and ſupport the crown. The conſequence drawn from thence was, that epiſcopacy itſelf was an uſurpation. My meaning is not, that this argument was ever uſed in the form of logic, to convince any man's judgment; but it influenced the affections of thouſands, and prevailed ſo far as to exclude the biſhops, not only from this houſe, where they had ſat from the earlieſt foundation of the monarchy; but from their churches alſo, where they had been received and reverenced as rulers and governors, for as many ages as can be counted from the days of the Apoſtles.

But why do I mention the excluſion of the biſhops from the Houſe of Lords, when ſo much more

fatal a blow was given to the liberties and conſtitution of England, by declaring the Houſe of Lords itſelf to be uſeleſs, and excluding the peerage from a ſhare in the legiſlature; a right derived to them through a long ſeries of anceſtors, from time immemorial.

The nobility were not free from the infection of thoſe times; and yet, to their honour be it remembered, that the execrable fact of this day could not be carried into execution ſo long as the peerage of England had any influence in the government. But when once they were removed, and this laſt ſupport of the ſinking crown taken away, the crown, and the head that wore it, fell a victim to the rage of deſperate and mercileſs men.

It is ſaid, (and the partiality I have for the honour of my country makes me willingly repeat it,) that few, very few in compariſon were wicked enough, and bold enough, to dip their hands in royal blood. But then, how fatal to kingdoms is the ſpirit of faction and diviſion, which could in the courſe of a few years throw all the powers of the kingdom into the hands of a few deſperate men; and enable them to trample under foot the crowns and the heads of princes, the rights and honours of the ancient nobility, the liberties and properties of a free people, and to tear up the very foundations of our once happy and envied conſtitution!

Could theſe acts of violence, and the cauſes which produced them, be ſuffered to lie quiet in hiſtory, as ſo many marks to point out to us the rocks and ſhelves on which our fathers made ſhipwreck, we their ſons might be the wiſer and the

better for their calamities. But if we permit their paſſions and reſentments to deſcend on us; if we keep the old quarrels alive by mutual reproaches and invectives, what elſe are we doing, but nurſing up the embers of that fire which once conſumed theſe kingdoms, and which may again burſt out into a deſtroying flame? But I forbear; and will forbode no evil to my country.

The application of what has been ſaid is ſo natural and obvious, that were it pardonable to omit it on this occaſion, I ſhould hardly mention it.

There is no pleaſure in viewing the follies and diſtractions of former times; nor is there any advantage, unleſs it is in order to grow better and wiſer by the example which hiſtory ſets before us. In the preſent caſe we have the experience, which coſt the nation dear, to warn both rulers and ſubjects, how carefully they ſhould avoid all occaſions of diviſion. The true way to do it is, for each ſide to maintain its own rights, without encroaching on thoſe of the other; for the conſtitution muſt ſuffer, whenever the rights of the crown, or the liberties of the people, are invaded. And though every Briton is to be commended if he is fond, and may be indulged, when he is over fond (if ſuch a caſe can be) of the liberties of his country; yet he ought always to remember, that as the people have their liberties, ſo the King has his rights, which are derived from the ſame conſtitution, and the ſame law, under which the people claim their liberties: and indeed the people have an intereſt and inheritance in the rights of the crown, which are ſo many truſts lodged in the hands of the Prince for the de-

fence and protection of the people, and to enable him the better to carry on the neceſſary works of government.

To conclude: as we have a Prince on the throne, under whoſe government, though ſome have complained, yet none have ſuffered, in the leaſt of their rights, by any act of power; who has ſhewn himſelf not only careful, but even jealous for the liberties of his people; let us in return yield him that ſhare in our hearts and affections, which is ſo juſtly due to him; and is a recompence, the eaſieſt for good ſubjects to pay, and yet the moſt valuable that a good Prince can receive.

DISCOURSE XI.

LUKE x. 36, 37.

Which now of theſe three thinkeſt thou was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he ſaid, He that ſhewed mercy on him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto him, Go, and do thou likewiſe.

THE caſe of the good Samaritan, to which the text has relation, was not principally intended to ſhew the neceſſity of works of mercy, or to recommend them to the practice of the world; theſe were points in which our Lord, and the perſon with whom he diſcourſed, had no difference. Nor is there in the world any material difference in opinion upon this point, as long as the duty is recommended in general propoſitions, and application is made to the common ſentiments of humanity in behalf of the miſeries and ſufferings of our fellow creatures. Nor are theſe ſentiments peculiar to Chriſtianity; they have their foundation in nature, and extend as far as reaſon and ſenſe prevail; and it is to the pen of an heathen we owe that memorable ſaying, *Homo ſum, nihil humanum a me alienum puto.*

But however agreeable theſe works are to the

ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, whilſt they conſider them only in general, yet in making the application to particular caſes in order to practiſe, many difficulties are moved; and men, unwilling to undergo the trouble or the expence which attend on works of charity, or lay aſide their prejudices and reſentments againſt perſons whoſe misfortunes and calamities have reduced them to be objects of charity, have found out many limitations on theſe duties; and have let in ſo many partial conſiderations and reſtrictions, that mercy and humanity, which naturally extend to all the world, ſeldom reach to one country, oftentimes not to all the parts of one family.

To remove theſe kinds of pretences or prejudices, was the direct view of our Lord in ſtating the caſe of the good Samaritan; and the perſon diſcourſing with him led him into this conſideration, by admitting the love of our neighbour to be a fundamental duty, and immediately inquiring after limitations and reſtrictions upon the practice of the duty. That this was the caſe will appear upon conſidering the whole paſſage, of which the text is a part.

At the 25th verſe, a lawyer ſtood up, and tempted our Lord, ſaying, *Maſter, what ſhall I do to inherit eternal life?* Our Lord refers him to the law, and aſks him what he read there. He anſwers out of the law—*Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyſelf.* Our Saviour replies, *Thou haſt anſwered well: this do, and thou ſhalt live.* Thus far all was right; and had the inquirer ſtopt here, we ſhould have had no reaſon

to ſuſpect but that his principles at leaſt were ſound and uncorrupt. He had great reaſon to be ſatisfied with the anſwer, when he had received that approbation from our Lord, *This do, and thou ſhalt live.* —But he goes on, and in the words of the 29th verſe it follows,—*But he, willing to juſtify himſelf, ſaid unto Jeſus, And who is my neighbour?* What now is it that he would juſtify himſelf from? No charge had been brought againſt him; ſo far from it, that our Lord had commended his diſcreet anſwer; and if he acted according to the terms he had propoſed, our Lord had promiſed him life. This can be no otherwiſe accounted for but from the conſciouſneſs of the perſon himſelf, who knew very well that his practice was not conformable to the general rule he had laid down, and which had been approved and commended by our Lord. Our Saviour's ſaying to him, THIS DO, *and thou ſhalt live,* called him to compare his practice with the rule he had propoſed; and upon a ſecret compariſon made in his own mind, he found that to juſtify himſelf, the terms of the rule muſt be explained and limited; and therefore he ſays, *Who is my neighbour?* In the ſenſe of the law, and according to our Saviour's expoſition of it, every man who wants our aſſiſtance, and whom we are able to aſſiſt, is our neighbour, and as ſuch entitled to our good offices. The Jews had ſome very near neighbours, in the reſtrained ſenſe of the word, with whom they were ſo far from entertaining any intercourſe of good offices, that all common civilities had ceaſed among them: thoſe were the Samaritans; and ſo far were the reſentments of the Jews carried, that when our Sa-

viour deſired a woman of Samaria to give him a little water to drink, ſhe expreſſes great wonder at it, and ſays, *How is it that thou, being a Jew, aſkeſt drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?* And the Evangeliſt gives the reaſon of her wonder—*for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans*—(John iv. 9.) This being the caſe, when our Saviour put eternal life upon *obedience* to this law, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf*, there was great reaſon to aſk the queſtion, *Who is my neighbour?* Had our Lord told him, in conformity to the opinions and practices of the Jews, that they only were neighbours who were of the family and ſtock of Abraham, or of the ſame faith and religion with themſelves, the man had found what he ſought after, a juſtification of himſelf: but when our Saviour, demanding his opinion upon the caſe of the good Samaritan, had forced him into a confeſſion that even the Samaritan was his neighbour, he ſtood condemned out of his own mouth; and upon the example of one, whom he reckoned his enemy, was ſent away with this ſhort reproof and admonition, *Go, and do thou likewiſe.*

The parable of the good Samaritan is ſo well known, that I ſhall but juſt mention the circumſtances of it:—One travelling from Jeruſalem fell among thieves, was robbed and wounded. A Prieſt and a Levite; who were, in every ſenſe of the word, neighbours to the unfortunate man; and if, in duties of common and general obligation, one can be more obliged than another, they were, by character, eſpecially obliged to relieve this poor neighbour; but they looked on him, and paſſed by

on the other ſide. A Samaritan, excluded by the Jews from all rights of neighbourhood, came by, and had compaſſion on the ſufferer; he dreſſed his wounds himſelf, and afterwards placed him, at his own expence, under the care of one, who was to ſee the cure perfected.

The queſtion now was, who was neighbour to this unfortunate man, in the ſenſe of the law, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.* As the caſe was ſtated, there was no room to inſiſt on the near relation the Prieſt and Levite bore to the wounded man; the nearer their relation, the worſe neighbours were they for neglecting him; no room to object againſt the Samaritan, his want of relation, or his difference in religion; the leſs and the fewer his private obligations were, the more diſintereſted was his obedience to the law, and the better neighbour was he. Upon the whole of this caſe, our Lord's concluſion is, *Go, and do thou likewiſe.*

Taking then this direction of our bleſſed Saviour, as it ſtands explained by theſe circumſtances, it will lead us to conſider,

I. The nature and extent of charity, or love to our neighbour.

II. The value of the excuſes which men frequently make for neglect of this duty. And,

III. The excellency of that particular charity, which gives occaſion to this day's meeting.

I. Of the nature and extent of charity, or love to our neighbour.

I obſerved to you before, that the principal intention of our bleſſed Saviour was not to ſhew the neceſſity of works of mercy, for that under certain

limitations was admitted on all ſides. Nor was it to recommend one kind of charity in preference to another, but to ſhew the extent of all. In ſtating a caſe, it was neceſſary to inſtance in ſome ſort of charitable work; but the concluſion, *Go, and do thou likewiſe*, is not confined to that kind of work only, but is intended to ſhew us who are our neighbours in regard to works of mercy and compaſſion in every kind.

The works of mercy are as various, and of as many kinds, as the wants and infirmities of men, which are the objects of mercy. Were men perfect, there would be nothing in them to pity or compaſſionate. Every kind, therefore, and every degree of miſery is an object of mercy; and whether men are expoſed to calamities by the neceſſity of their condition, and the overruling providence of God; or whether they bring them on themſelves by ſin and wickedneſs, or by folly and indiſcretion; yet ſtill, conſidered as miſerable, they are objects of pity. If this were not ſo, mercy would not be one of the attributes of the Deity. For he is not moved by a fellow-feeling of our calamities, or any apprehenſion for himſelf; for no evil can approach him. Sin and wickedneſs are attended with guilt as well as miſery, and therefore alſo objects of juſtice and puniſhment; and it may, perhaps, be a caſe attended with difficulties, when we attempt to reconcile the operations of juſtice and mercy, with reſpect to the ſame ſubject. But if God be a God of mercy, as undoubtedly he is, the concluſion muſt ſtand, that miſery, viewed by the eye of reaſon, is an object of compaſſion; and the

conſequence muſt be, that, in the reaſon of things, mercy is as extenſive as miſery; and not to be confined, by any particular or partial conſiderations, to miſery of one kind, or of one man more than another. If we conſider ourſelves, therefore, merely as reaſonable creatures, no reaſon can be aſſigned for excluding any object of miſery from our pity and compaſſion. But if we conſider ourſelves as men, there is another and perhaps a more ſenſible inducement to the practice of the works of mercy, and which upon examination will be found, as far as our power of doing good goes, of like general influence. And this ariſes from reflecting, that there is no miſery we ſee, to which we are not ourſelves liable. The caſe therefore of the miſerable is a common caſe, and in ſome ſenſe every man's own. If we find ourſelves better than others, ſo as to avoid the calamities which ſin and iniquity bring upon many; or wiſer than others, ſo as to ſhun the evils which folly and indiſcretion draw down upon numbers; this is ſo far from being a reaſon why we ſhould deſpiſe or neglect their ſufferings, that it daily reminds us to aſk of ourſelves this queſtion, *Who made thee to differ from another?* And if we anſwer it as we ſhould, it will furniſh us with another reaſon for the exerciſe of charity, which will extend to all men.

For, if all men are the ſons of one common father; if all conditions of life are the appointment of one common maſter; no man can be reckoned a ſtranger to us, who is ſon of the ſame father, and ſervant of the ſame maſter; however he may, for reaſons unknown to us, be placed in a lower condi-

tion of life, and called to ſerve in a meaner ſtation, endowed with leſs and fewer abilities.

Carry theſe conſiderations with you into the world, and view the wants and neceſſities of the poor; liſten to the cries of widows and orphans, to the moans and complaints of thoſe who ſuffer under the torments of body or of mind: take into your view the follies and the weakneſſes of men, who are perpetually ſtruggling with the inconveniences, which a little prudence might have prevented, but which require a great deal of care and ſorrow either to cure, or to bear them; and think a little, what reaſon, what the ſenſe of your own infirmities, what the regard due to the common Father and Maſter of all, require at your hands. One duly attentive to theſe reaſons could never fall into the little conſiderations, whether *this* miſerable man was his countryman or townſman, whether *the other* was of the ſame party or opinion with himſelf; for the great and true reaſons on which mercy and charity are founded, exclude all ſuch little reſpects and relations.

As the caſe ſtands thus upon the foot of reaſon, and the natural ſentiments of men, ſo likewiſe have the precepts of the Goſpel bound theſe duties upon us in the ſame extent.

Honour, eſteem, and reverence, are due to thoſe who deſerve honour, eſteem, and reverence; but love is a debt due to all men, and is a debt never to be fully paid and exhauſted. Therefore St. Paul commands, that we *render* to every man *his due*, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour *is due*: but when he comes to ſpeak of love, he varies his ſtyle, and con-

ſiders us in this reſpect as debtor to every man: *owe* no man any thing, *but to love one another.* As if he had ſaid, all other debts due to particular perſons, you muſt take care to diſcharge; but love is due to all, and you muſt never think of paying or clearing the debt of love to each other; for that is a debt which will be owing as long as you live; it is a perpetual duty, and can never have an end. In the ſame manner are the precepts of love and mercy enjoined by our bleſſed Saviour in general terms, not confining them to particular objects, but leaving them at large, and open, to be applied to all men: *Bleſſed,* ſays he, *are the merciful, for they ſhall obtain mercy.* Had this been a duty owing to any perſons, as they ſtand particularly related to us, our Lord would not have left this material duty imperfect, by neglecting to ſpecify the proper objects of it; but having directed our love and mercy to no men in particular, we muſt conclude that all in general are the objects of it.

If we conſider theſe laws as derived from the author of nature, and of the Goſpel, we ſhall find that they proceeded from a love as univerſal as that which they enjoin; the general good of mankind is the end provided for in theſe laws. The miſeries and calamities of life are many, and not to be avoided; and perhaps wiſe men, though they complain leaſt, feel them moſt. It is a melancholy thing to reflect how much of this miſery is of our own making, and what a great abatement might be made in the ſorrows of life, if every man would but lend his hand to make himſelf and the reſt of the

world happy. The unkind offices we daily receive from malice, ill-nature, and revenge, from envy, and cauſeleſs reſentments, make a much greater figure in the calamities of life, than all the evils which the providence of God and the condition of human life bring on us. And even the calamities which cannot be avoided, might be mitigated by the kind offices of our brethren. And therefore to oblige men to charity and mercy, is to unite them in a confederacy againſt the evils and miſeries of life; that no ſooner ſhall misfortune ſeize one, but all ſhall be alarmed, and help flow in from every quarter; that every hand ſhall bring aſſiſtance, and every tongue bring comfort to the afflicted; and each man's happineſs be the common concern, while every man loves his neighbour as himſelf. What a bleſſed ſtate would this be! and how much happineſs did the wiſe author of nature deſign for us, when he made the common intereſt of mankind to be every particular man's duty! What love to man did the author of the Goſpel ſhew, when he required it, as a mark of our being his diſciples, that we ſhould love one another!

Having conſidered now the extent of this great duty of love and mercy towards our brethren, it will be eaſy in the ſecond place to eſtimate by this meaſure what value there is in the excuſes which are frequently made for the neglect of this duty.

But to ſpeak without confuſion on this ſubject, it is neceſſary to diſtinguiſh between love, as merely a ſentiment and habit of the mind, and as coupled

with a power and ability to exert itſelf in external acts of mercy. Conſidered as an habit and ſentiment of the mind, it muſt be univerſal, without exception; and no pretence whatever can juſtify malevolence and hatred in any inſtance. But it may be, and often is the caſe, that thoſe who have the habit of this virtue are able to exert it in very few inſtances; they are too poor to give alms, too ignorant to give advice, of too little conſideration in the world to aid or protect their neighbours. In all theſe caſes want of ability is ſomething more than an excuſe, for an excuſe goes to the omiſſion of duty; but there can be no duty or obligation on any man to do what he has no power or ability to perform. But yet let the meaneſt among us conſider, that there are duties of love proper to their ſtation; if they have no money to beſtow, yet they have good or ill words to beſtow on their neighbours; they are able to aſſiſt in vindicating or aſperſing their characters; and this is an inſtance in which their good-will or malevolence may be as effectually ſhewn, as if they had great revenues to diſpoſe of; and I am afraid the poorer ſort, who are petitioners for charity of another kind, want often to be put in mind of *this kind* of charity themſelves. But to go on.

Where men's fortunes and ſtations in the world enable them to exert their love and mercy in acts of generoſity and benevolence to perſons in diſtreſs, there is often an unwillingneſs, and always an excuſe to attend it. From what has been ſaid of the duty in general, it is evident, that to confine our charity to relations, acquaintance, or men of the

ſame country, is acting inconſiſtently with the great reaſons on which the duty itſelf is founded, and is therefore a breach of duty which cannot be juſtified; and it is indeed that very pretence which our Saviour intended to exclude and condemn in the parable of the good Samaritan. But what ſhall we ſay to the perſonal merit of thoſe who are objects of charity? In the parable the perſon relieved was a ſtranger to him who relieved him, and was known to him only by his miſery and diſtreſs; and therefore in this example ſet before us, the perſonal character had no influence in the charity. And in other places of the Goſpel we are exhorted to follow the example ſet us by our heavenly Father, who maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt. But as no man's ability to do good in any way is unlimited, it is commendable ſurely to ſeek after the propereſt and moſt deſerving objects of charity; and in this conſideration the virtue and innocence of the ſufferer muſt be of great moment.

There would perhaps be little reaſon upon the whole to be very nice and curious in the choice of objects, were it not for the many frauds and cheats which are daily practiſed upon the charity of well-diſpoſed perſons. Begging is become a trade, and without doubt it is a very wicked one; it is not only a cheat on the giver, but it is robbing the ſtock of the poor, and perverting what was intended for the comfort of real diſtreſs, to the ſupport of idleneſs. It is greatly injurious to the poor in another reſpect, as it lays a general ſuſpicion upon all who apply for alms; and many a proper object fails of the relief

due to him, becauſe he can ſay no more in his true caſe than counterfeits ſay every day in a falſe one.

There is another very great diſcouragement which charitable perſons are under, from obſerving the ill uſe which the poor often make of their benefactions to them. One would imagine that a man who wanted food and raiment, and all other neceſſaries of life, was pretty well ſecured againſt the exceſſes of ſtrong liquors, or any other temptations, which muſt neceſſarily exhauſt his little ſtock, and leave him unable to provide for his wants. But the caſe is far otherwiſe; the general corruption of manners, too plainly to be ſeen in this country, has ſpread among the loweſt; and neceſſity itſelf is grown luxurious. It is very much to be lamented, that ſo much art and ſkill have been ſhewn of late years to make drunkenneſs the cheapeſt of all vices; for it will, it already has made it the commoneſt, and let in all the vices which follow this exceſs upon the pooreſt of our people; who were formerly ſo far happy in their poverty, that their want ſecured them from many vices, to which their richer neighbours were expoſed.

How to adviſe charitable perſons to ſteer clear of theſe inconveniences in their private benefactions, I know not; perhaps it may be a good rule in general not to be too curious, or hard to be ſatisfied in theſe caſes. But with reſpect to the great work of charity, which has called us together this day, I can with pleaſure obſerve to you, that it ſtands free of theſe difficulties; it will appear ſo to do from the nature of the charity itſelf, and the method in which it is conducted: and though neither the perſons

who have undertaken this good work deſire to have their praiſes ſet forth, nor is it my intention to do it; yet, in juſtice to the work itſelf, give me leave to mention very briefly ſome circumſtances attending it, that may recommend it to the approbation of good people.

In the firſt place then, the perſons admitted to partake in this charity are real objects, and from the nature of the thing they muſt be ſo: the blind, the lame, the diſeaſed of various kinds, reſort hither for a cure of their evils. That ſuch are proper objects of charity, there is no doubt; but when complaints of this nature are uſed to move private charity, they are often counterfeited; and the money intended for the relief of a poor cripple is perhaps given to a ſturdy vagabond. But that caſe can never happen here; for cheats and counterfeits never come to an hoſpital to be cured; they never deſire that their complaints ſhould be examined by the ſkilful eye and hand of the ſurgeon. Whatever therefore may happen in other caſes, you may be ſure to meet with no frauds of this kind in this charity.

There are diſtempers, indeed, which may be pretended, and in judging of which even the ſkilful may be impoſed on; but neither will ſuch frauds come here; for nobody will pretend ſuch diſeaſes merely for the ſake of going into a courſe of phyſic, and ſubmitting to the rules and orders of a place, which, though it affords ample proviſion for the wants of the miſerable, yet it affords no temptation to the idle and vicious, that they ſhould deſire to come under the rule and diſcipline of it.

Secondly, Whatever is given in ſupport of this in-

ſtitution flows from the true and generous principle of charity, before deſcribed: all perſons are entitled to relief here, if they really want it; and every contributor is moved by the general regard to the good of men, without any regard to the little partialities, which often influence our private charities, whether we intend they ſhould or no. But to ſubſcribe to ſupport an hoſpital, open to all juſt complaints, is a general ſubſcription for the aſſiſtance and comfort of men in miſery and diſtreſs, without any other conſideration whatever: and therefore this charity has this excellent ingredient in it, that it is *love without partiality*.

Laſtly, There is one inducement more, which is the good management and economy ſhewn in the application of this charity. I have mentioned now a thing worthy to be highly commended and extolled, but not by me in this audience. I ſhall take notice of it, therefore, only as a fact, a fact publiſhed by laying the accounts of this charity before the world, and in which every man, who pleaſes, may at an eaſy rate have full ſatisfaction.

If this conſideration is, and ſurely it is a great inducement to benefactors to encourage this good work; it is an argument alſo to thoſe who have employed their time and their pains in the affairs of this houſe, to perſevere in this work of love: their charity is more, perhaps, than they imagine: others give whatever their proportion amounts to; but theſe, by their good and wiſe adminiſtration, encourage many to give; it is a circumſtance which they may reflect on with comfort here, and it will ſurely have its reward hereafter.

Go on therefore with cheerfulneſs in this great and good employment; and in confidence that you are ſerving a Maſter, who will not forget this your work and labour of love.

DISCOURSE XII.

DEUT. xxxii. 45, 46.

And Moſes made an end of ſpeaking all theſe words to all Iſrael.

And he ſaid unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I teſtify among you this day; which ye ſhall command your children to obſerve, to do all the words of this law.

YOU have in the text the laſt piece of advice which Moſes gave to the people of Iſrael; for on the ſelf-ſame day, on which he made this exhortation, he was ſummoned by God to depart from this world; accordingly he died on the mountain of Nebo, and was gathered to his people.

The laſt advice of dying friends naturally makes a ſtrong impreſſion on the minds of thoſe who ſurvive them; and it is as natural for thoſe who are leaving this world, to make the thing, which they eſteem to be of the greateſt conſequence and importance to their friends, who are to ſtay behind them, the ſubject-matter of their laſt advice.

Conſider now the character of Moſes; the many years he ſpent in conducting the people of Iſrael from Egypt to the land of promiſe; the high of-

fice he bore, by being appointed by God a prophet and lawgiver to his people: conſider him, after a long courſe of teaching and exhortation, giving his laſt advice before he died; and you muſt needs think the happineſs of the people to be extremely concerned in the matter recommended to them by ſo great a friend, by one of ſuch authority, and under ſuch circumſtances.

The advice is no leſs intereſting than is to be expected: it aims at laying a ſolid foundation of happineſs for that and all ſucceeding generations; by inſtructing the people how to perpetuate to their poſterity the knowledge of God and his law, and to make him their conſtant friend and protector; namely, by inſtilling into the minds of their children a ſenſe of the great things which God had done for them and their forefathers, and by forming them early to obedience to the divine law under which they lived:—*Ye ſhall command your children to obſerve and do all the words of this law.*

The Jews had ſtill a greater reaſon to be careful and conſtant in diſcharging this duty towards their children; they had not only the laſt command of their great lawgiver for it, but they well knew that they were diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the world by Providence for the ſake of this duty. Their great anceſtor Abraham was choſen to be the head of a great nation, that he might, and becauſe God knew he would, be diligent to tranſmit to his poſterity the knowledge of God's laws, and to breed them up in obedience to them. In the eighteenth chapter of the book of Geneſis, God declares his purpoſe of making *Abraham a great and mighty na-*

tion; and that *all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed in him.* At the 19th verſe, the reaſon of this peculiar regard to Abraham is given; *For I know him, that he will command his children and his houſehold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judgment.*

That the command of Moſes lays an obligation on parents to make uſe of their authority with their children to bring them into ſubjection to the law of God, is put out of all doubt by the language of the text. They were to command their children to obſerve and do all the words of the law. But this precept had a larger and more extenſive view, being given not merely as the advice of a preacher, but as the injunction of a great lawgiver, preſcribing a proper method to eſtabliſh and ſecure the proſperity of a nation. The education therefore of the children of a country may, and ought, in all wiſe governments, to be conſidered as a national concern.

This concluſion may appear, perhaps, with greater force, as ſupported by the declaration of God concerning Abraham, juſt before mentioned. God ſaw that Abraham would command his children and houſehold after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do juſtice and judgment; and therefore he determined to make him a great and mighty nation. Now if this diſpoſition, ſeen and approved in Abraham, has no relation to the office of a public magiſtrate, the reaſon given for making Abraham head of a great people, is a very ſtrange one. For if the magiſtrate has, and ought to have, no concern in ſeeing the youth of the country brought

up in the fear of God, Abraham's diſpoſition to take this care upon him could be no reaſon for making him the head of a great nation.

To judge of the methods which have been or may be applied to propagate or preſerve religion and the fear of God in the world, we muſt conſider the nature, capacities, and circumſtances of men in general; the influences under which they act; and which of them may be properly made uſe of in the caſe in queſtion. Religion being the ſervice of a free agent, all external force is excluded as abſolutely improper: inſtruction is the proper application to a reaſonable mind; and were men under no influence but that of reaſon, inſtruction would be the only proper application: but men are born with paſſions, as well as reaſon, and the paſſions grow ſtrong and turbulent, much ſooner than reaſon comes to ſuch maturity as to be able to correct and reſtrain them; and therefore authority is wanted as well as inſtruction, to form the mind of men to virtue and religion.

I am ſenſible there are ſome, who have their objections to this method of propagating religion, who think all men ſhould be left free to judge for themſelves, without having the prejudices of education thrown into the ſcale on either ſide. They ſee that in Chriſtian countries, all are, through the power of education, Chriſtians; in Mahometan countries, they are, for the ſame reaſon, Mahometans; and they think true religion ſhould reject the uſe of thoſe means, which ſerve indifferently to promote truth and falſehood.

It is no uncommon thing for men to purſue their

ſpeculations till they loſe ſight of nature; the conſequence of which is, that they fall into notions contradictory to the experience of mankind, and abſolutely impoſſible to be reduced to practice.

Look into the hiſtory of ages paſt, there is no inſtance to be found of children brought up free from the impreſſions of cuſtom and education; conſider the nature and condition of men, and it is impoſſible there ever ſhould be.

Children have eyes and ears; what they ſee, they naturally imitate; what they hear, influences their tender minds. And where parents neglect the care of their children, they are left to chance, and pick up notions and opinions from others; perhaps from the footman, who oftentimes is conſtant companion to the heir of the family. So that where parents omit to inſtruct their children, it is not leaving them to their own freedom of judgment, but it is leaving them to receive impreſſions from far worſe hands.

But as this objection, if there be any weight in it, directly impeaches the natural means ordained by Providence for preſerving true religion, and the means enjoined as well under the Chriſtian as the Jewiſh diſpenſation for perpetuating the great truths of revelation, it may be proper, perhaps, to take this matter a little higher, and conſider how it ſtands on the principles of reaſon and human nature.

Did men come into this world perfect, and equally perfect, having their minds ſtored with all neceſſary ideas, and able to make a proper uſe of all the faculties of the underſtanding, there might be ſome reaſon, perhaps, in ſaying, "Leave themſelves

" to judge for themſelves." But as the caſe is otherwiſe, and we bring little more into the world with us than an animal life, and arrive by ſlow degrees to the uſe of reaſon and the knowledge of things about us, it is the direction of nature, in conſequence of this courſe of nature, that parents ſhould teach their children, as they grow capable of learning, the things that are neceſſary to their well-being.

The great force of cuſtom and education, whether rightly applied or otherwiſe, could not be long unobſerved in the world: as ſoon as it was obſerved, it became a ſtrong call upon the natural affections of parents to guard the tender minds of their children againſt wrong impreſſions, and to prevent the growth of evil habits in them. Without the exerciſe of this care in ſome degree, authority cannot be maintained on the part of parents, nor duty required on the part of children. If parents have nothing to teach, what have children to obey? What then muſt become of the natural duties ariſing from this relation, when nothing will remain, unleſs perhaps ſome degree of fondneſs, ſuch as brute creatures have by inſtinct of nature?

That this natural force of cuſtom and education was intended by Providence to act in conjunction with reaſon, for the ſupport of virtue and religion, there can be no doubt; and whoever conſiders what God has done, by natural or ſupernatural means, for the ſake of religion, will ſee abundant evidence for this truth.

But, when the ways of men grew corrupt, when cuſtom and education were gone over to the ſide of vice and ſuperſtition, and reaſon and religion were

left alone to ſtruggle for themſelves; it is hardly to be imagined how univerſally the corruption ſpread, and how ſtrong poſſeſſion was given to idolatry and ſuperſtition throughout the world. It may be hard to ſay, what induced men at firſt to conſecrate birds and beaſts, ſtocks and ſtones, and to fall down and worſhip them. But when once thoſe follies were introduced, cuſtom and education ſpread them far and wide; and they took ſuch deep root, that human reaſon could not ſhake them, but was content for ages together to wear the chains of blind ſuperſtition. Cuſtom and education cannot be ſhut out of the caſe; and influence they muſt and will have; and if they are not ſecured on the ſide of reaſon, and taken in as aſſiſtants to it, they will ſoon grow to be tyrants over reaſon; and men will think and act as if they had none.

We read in ancient ſtory of a people, who uſed, when their parents and relations were grown old and infirm, to kill them and feaſt on them. The cuſtom appeared, as well it might, barbarous and inhuman in the eyes of all civilized nations: but thoſe people being aſked in their turn, what they thought of thoſe who ſuffered their aged parents to linger and die of themſelves, and then burnt or buried their dead bodies, they expreſſed the greateſt abhorrence for ſuch impiety. Had the Egyptians, or any other people, been examined in like manner, upon any or all their ſuperſtitions, their ſentiments in favour of their national cuſtoms would have been found as ſtrong, and as hard to be rectified.

So general and ſo ſtrong is the force of cuſtom

and education, that the influence may be ſaid to be natural to the mind of man; and if the influence is natural, it was, doubtleſs, deſigned by the Author of nature to be ſubſervient to good purpoſes. That he intended it for this uſe, is manifeſt alſo from his making this uſe of it, and from his interpoſing to correct the abuſes to which this natural influence was but too liable through the paſſions and corruptions of men.

Conſider, from the beginning of things what proviſion was made for propagating religion in the world. Adam was created in the ſtate of manhood; and as he came a man, and not a child, out of the hands of his Creator, he brought into the world with him all knowledge neceſſary to a man; of which the knowledge of God and true religion was the moſt neceſſary part. Of him then ſufficient care was taken.

But all after him came infants into the world, void of knowledge, capable of coming at it but by ſlow degrees, and liable to many errors in the only thing they had to depend on, the uſe of their reaſon. What care now was taken to direct them right in this momentous affair of religion? Was it not plainly this, that they were put into the hands of an inſtructor, who was himſelf inſtructed by God, able to teach them the great works of Providence in the creation of all things, and to point out to them the duty owing from the creature to the Creator?

How long this influence continued to preſerve a ſenſe of true religion, we know not; probably in

ſome tolerable degree for many ages; for many ages paſſed before God, for the wickedneſs of men, deſtroyed the world by a deluge.

Conſider now again what care was taken of religion at the reſtoration of the world after the deluge; the wicked with all their ungodly deeds periſhed in the waters; one diſtinguiſhed *preacher of righteouſneſs*, with his family, was ſaved, to be the father of a new world, and to teach the ways of righteouſneſs to his poſterity. And what was this, but uniting once more the force of reaſon, education, and cuſtom in the cauſe of virtue and holineſs; and turning its natural influence into its proper channel, which had been divided and perverted by the wickedneſs of men?

After the deluge, as the world grew populous, it grew corrupt again; and idolatry overſpread the face of the earth. God had promiſed never to deſtroy the earth again for the wickedneſs of the inhabitants. But, to check the courſe of impiety, and to keep up a ſenſe and evidence of true religion in the midſt of an idolatrous generation, he thought fit in his wiſdom to raiſe up a nation to be his own peculiar people. He made choice of Abraham to be head and father of this nation; and we are at no loſs to account for the reaſon of this choice; for God has told us with what view he elected Abraham—*I know him, that he will command his children and his houſehold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judgment.*

When the deſcendants from Abraham were grown numerous enough to make a people of themſelves, God was pleaſed to give them a law, introduced

and confirmed by many ſignal deliverances, and many ſigns and wonders; and to perpetuate the memory of them through all generations, many rites and ceremonies were inſtituted, to be conſtant parts of the national religion; which repreſented and ſet before the eyes of the people the great things which God had done for them; ſuch, for inſtance, was the paſſover; ſuch was that ſolemn profeſſion to be made at the offering of the firſt-fruits, recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. He who brought the offering was to ſpeak and ſay before the Lord his God,

"—A Syrian ready to periſh was my father; and "he went down into Egypt, and ſojourned there "with a few, and became there a nation, great, "mighty, and populous.

"And the Egyptians evil-entreated us, and af-"flicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage.

"And when we cried unto the Lord God of our "fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on "our affliction, and our labour, and our oppreſ-"ſion.

"And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt "with a mighty hand, and with an out-ſtretched "arm, and with great terribleneſs, and with ſigns, "and with wonders.

"And he hath brought us into this place, and "hath given us this land, even a land that floweth "with milk and honey.

"And now, behold, I have brought the firſt-fruits "of the land, which thou, O Lord, haſt given "me."

Theſe inſtitutions, introduced at firſt by poſitive

law, ſoon obtained the force of national cuſtoms, and became a ſtrong barrier againſt the ſuperſtition of the idolatrous nations round Judea; and they were intended to anſwer this purpoſe.

But it muſt be obſerved of theſe inſtitutions in general, that they were not intended to operate merely by the force of cuſtom; but were adapted to preſerve and renew the memory of the true reaſons in which the religion of the Jews was founded. If you had been to reaſon with a Jew upon the obedience due to the law of Moſes, could you ſay more to him than what the feaſt of the paſſover taught him, and what the profeſſion made at the offering of the firſt-fruits contained? Theſe inſtitutions therefore intended to make cuſtom ſubſervient to reaſon and true religion; and they were ſo conſtituted, that they could go no where as cuſtoms without carrying with them the true reaſon of religion.

Upon this foot the Jewiſh religion ſtood, till God thought fit by a new revelation to call all the world to repentance, and obedience to the Goſpel of Chriſt Jeſus.

The nations of the earth were idolaters before the coming of Chriſt; and their religious worſhip was not only directed to falſe objects, but was in itſelf impure and corrupt, and tended to introduce great depravity of manners. The ſeveral forms of ſuperſtition in ſeveral countries had eſtabliſhment, education, and cuſtom, to ſupport them; and theſe preſcriptive rights had got ſuch ſtrong poſſeſſion, that there was no hope of ſeeing them beat out by human wiſdom. Some few perhaps ſaw the follies which ſurrounded them; but their wiſdom was of

no uſe towards reforming the world, whatever it might be to themſelves.

To root out this inveterate evil required ſupernatural aſſiſtance; and yet ſuch aſſiſtance as was conſiſtent with the freedom and reaſon of human minds, and agreeable to the nature of religion; which loſes its very being when it is ſeparated from freedom and reaſon.

The power of miracles was ſuch an aſſiſtance; for miracles are an appeal to reaſon, as much as the works of nature are; and therefore miracles offered in ſupport of true religion are to be conſidered as new arms put into the hand of reaſon, to enable it to ſubdue the powers of corrupt cuſtom and education.

My ſubject does not lead me to conſider all the purpoſes which Providence had to ſerve by the power of miracles; but this manifeſtly was one, though not the only one, to awaken the attention of the world, to conſider what they and their fathers had been doing when they fell down before ſtocks and ſtones, and forgot the Lord who made them, and to whoſe command they ſaw all nature was obedient.

When reaſon and true religion were by this powerful aſſiſtance ſet free from the ſhackles of idolatry and ſuperſtition, miracles ceaſed; and, for perpetuating the knowledge of God and of his truth in the world, the natural and ordinary methods of teaching and inſtructing received an additional ſtrength under the Goſpel, by ſetting apart an order of men, whoſe buſineſs it ſhould be to publiſh to every generation the great things which God had wrought for them through Chriſt Jeſus. This, I

lay, was an additional ſtrength to the ordinary and natural means of education, but was never deſigned to ſuperſede it; for parents are obliged by the law of the Goſpel, as well as by the law of nature, to breed up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and where this care is wanting, it is rarely that the other can take place; children neglected naturally grow headſtrong and ſelf-willed; and we ſee, by ſad experience, that they are ſent too late for inſtruction to the church, who were never inured to it at home.

Laying then theſe things together, conſider, what is there in the preſent circumſtances of things that we can do to promote virtue and religion in the world? We have only natural and ordinary means within our power. May we uſe them? or muſt the care of virtue and religion be given up? If not, the propereſt, I had almoſt ſaid the only effectual method to preſerve them, is to lay a foundation for the youth of the country.

But theſe general reflections do ſo naturally ariſe from what has been ſaid, that I will leave them to your own thoughts; and go on to conſider the particular caſe now before us.

The ſtate of religion in Ireland very well deſerves the attention of every man in this kingdom, who has a concern either for the purity of the Goſpel, or for the ſecurity of the government under which we live.

The Reformation was very imperfectly carried on in Ireland; and the bulk of the people have been ever ſince, and ſtill are, Papiſts. The natives have a language of their own, extremely hard to be learned

or underſtood by any but themſelves, which makes it almoſt impoſſible to convey any light or knowledge to them. The prieſts among them, who talk their language, being born and bred among them, know as little of any thing elſe, as the people themſelves do. So that Popery in Ireland is old traditionary Popery, without any of the correction or improvement which Popery in other parts has been forced into by the light of the Reformation. The learned of the church of Rome have been long palliating and refining their abſurd doctrines and practices. Tell them that they worſhip ſaints and images, they will diſtinguiſh between direct worſhip, and relative worſhip, between religious ſervice, and honour and reſpect due to the ſaints. But the poor Iriſh worſhip ſaints and images, and have never heard even of theſe refinements; which being invented as anſwers to objections, are of no uſe among a poor people, ſecured by their ignorance, and a language underſtood by themſelves only, from all objections.

Not many years ago a worthy clergyman of Ireland, with great pains and labour, made himſelf maſter of the language of the natives, with an intent to preach the Goſpel among them. He entered upon the work, and the ſucceſs ſeemed to outrun his wiſhes: his audience was numerous, and the people ſeemed to be much affected with his diſcourſes: but as ſoon as this was perceived, the prieſts had orders to publiſh an excommunication againſt every perſon who ſhould attend theſe ſermons: the effect was, that the preacher was entirely deſerted.

The caſe is much the ſame in ſome pariſhes of the kingdom, which have not a Proteſtant in them, except the miniſter of the pariſh; but few perhaps, who underſtand his language, and they reſtrained by all the terrors, which the prieſts of Rome can infuſe into poor ignorant people, from giving ear to his inſtructions. How uncomfortable a ſituation muſt this be to an honeſt minded clergyman, to find himſelf placed in an office, with a great truſt annexed to it, and which it is morally impoſſible for him to diſcharge; what a reproach is it to our Proteſtant church in the eyes of the adverſary, to have ſhepherds appointed, and no flocks to be attended; rulers ſettled where there are none to be directed; miniſters without congregations; preachers without hearers!

This great evil ought to be removed, muſt be removed, as far as proper and reaſonable methods can prevail; and till all reaſonable methods are tried, the reproach will remain with us unanſwered.

Conſider this ſtate of religion; and let every Chriſtian lay his hand to his heart, and ſay, whether this caſe calls for help or no. Can we be blameleſs, if we look on, and ſee thouſands periſh for whom Chriſt died, without ſo much as offering to help or relieve them? Theſe people, poor as they are, ignorant as they are, are yet children of the ſame Father with us, men of the ſame nature, fellow ſubjects and fellow Chriſtians: if they know but little of Chriſt, by whoſe name they are called; if they live in darkneſs and ſuperſtition, and in blind obedience to Popiſh tyranny; they are but in the ſame caſe in which our forefathers were, and from which

we are happily delivered. How ſtrongly do theſe circumſtances plead their cauſe! The reverence we have for the common Father of all; the benevolence due to our fellow creatures; the love we owe to men united to us in one and the ſame ſociety; compaſſion to their unfortunate caſe, which was once our own; regard to the name of Chriſt, by which they and we are called; do with one voice exhort, incite, and provoke us to this labour and work of love, in which their preſent and future happineſs, the glory of God, and the honour of the Goſpel, are ſo nearly concerned.

There is another conſideration well worth your attention, which though it affords not ſo ſtrong a reaſon as thoſe before mentioned, yet a ſtrong one it does afford, to encourage you to go on with the good work you have undertaken; I mean the proſperity and welfare of the conſtitution and government under which we live.

The preſent government and the Proteſtant religion muſt ſtand or fall together; Papiſts are by principle enemies to both; the more ignorant they are, the more determined and deſperate enemies they will be; as being free from the reſtraints of conſcience and reflection, to yield blind obedience to their directors.

The Papiſts in Ireland, by the loweſt computation I have ſeen, are five to two. The civil and military government are in the hands of Proteſtants, and in times of public tranquillity are ſufficient to keep the Papiſts in due obedience: but whenever the public has been diſtreſſed by internal commotions, the ſtrength of Popery in Ireland has been fatally expe-

rienced. The ſituation of affairs in Charles the Firſt's time brought them to take arms; and the general maſſacre of the Proteſtants is ſtill freſh in memory, in which thouſands periſhed by cruelties unknown even among barbarous nations.

At the Revolution, the Popery of Ireland endangered the Proteſtantiſm of the three kingdoms, by finding employment for the arms of England, when they were wanted elſewhere to ſupport the cauſe of liberty and religion: and ſhould we ever be ſo unhappy as to ſee our religion and liberty put again to the chance of war, there can be no doubt which ſide the Iriſh Papiſts would take.

Even in the times of peace they are of little uſe to the public, being through want of education greatly unacquainted with the arts of civil life, and ſtrangers to the improvements which make men great and conſiderable. They may be fit for arms, but they are not fit to be truſted in a Proteſtant army: many of them indeed take to this employment; and they are a ſeminary for foreign troops; a ſtrength bred up among ourſelves, but always at the ſervice of our enemies. So that when you compute their numbers, and their force, you muſt place their ſtrength to the account, not of their natural Prince, the King of Great Britain, but rather to ſome foreign powers, and to thoſe eſpecially, of whom England has the greateſt reaſon to be jealous.

What ſhall we ſay then to this ſtate of the caſe? Shall theſe great numbers continue ſtill to be our enemies; or ſhall we try to gain their affections, and make them friends as well as ſubject to the government? Shall we ſee them ſtill ſacrificing their

lives due to the defence of their country, in the ſervice of foreign powers; or ſhall we engage their hearts and hands in a nobler warfare, in the cauſe of liberty? Shall we permit them to remain untaught, uncultivated, uſeleſs to themſelves and to the world? or ſhall we ſhew them the arts of life and honeſt induſtry, teach them to be happy, and of ſervice to themſelves and to the public?

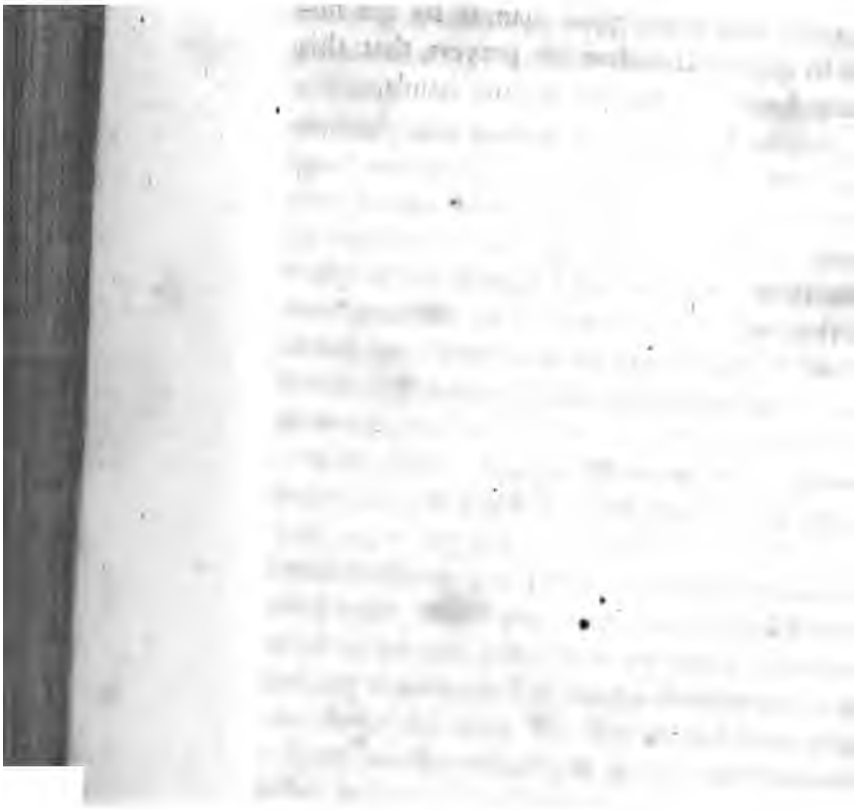
There can be no doubt which part is to be choſen. But as even the temporal advantages propoſed are not to be obtained but by ſetting theſe poor people free from the tyranny of Popery, and by opening their minds to ſee and receive the truths of the Goſpel; the methods to be uſed with them muſt be ſuch as are conſiſtent with the nature of religion, and ſuch as the circumſtances of the people will admit.—And ſuch only have you made choice of.

When you receive children, whoſe parents willingly entruſt them to your care, (and others you ſeek not after,) you act by commiſſion under the paternal authority, and are authorized by the ſame natural right, when you teach and inſtruct ſuch children, as parents themſelves are when they teach and inſtruct their own. Whoever therefore has any objection to the work you are engaged in, muſt firſt diſpute the parent's right to educate his own children, before he can controvert yours.

If the conſent of parents gives you a right, your charity, and benevolence in undertaking a duty, which the poor parents are incapable of diſcharging themſelves, will not fail to give you a reward in due time. Ages to come, when they feel the happy

change, the foundation of which is now laying, ſhall bleſs your memory; and thouſands yet unborn may owe their happineſs in this world, and their hopes in a better, to this work and labour of love.

Go on then, and may ſucceſs wait on your care. The wiſhes of all, who wiſh well to their country, are with you; and every good man, if he has nothing elſe to give, will beſtow his prayers, that this work of the Lord may proſper in your hands.



DISCOURSE XIII.

2 Cor. ix. 12.

For the adminiſtration of this ſervice not only ſupplieth the want of the ſaints, but is abundant alſo by many thankſgivings unto God.

To take in the full ſenſe of the Apoſtle upon this ſubject, the 14th verſe ought to be read together with the text; and then the whole will run thus: *For the adminiſtration of this ſervice not only ſupplieth the want of the ſaints, but is abundant alſo by many thankſgivings unto God; and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.*

The occaſion of theſe words was in ſhort this: the Apoſtle had been making collections among the Chriſtians of ſeveral countries, for the relief of the poor diſtreſſed brethren in Judea; and, intending ſhortly to viſit Corinth, he ſends before him an exhortation to them to be in readineſs to anſwer the hopes and expectations which themſelves had raiſed in him, that he ſhould receive a large ſupply at their hands. The chapter of the text is entirely ſpent in this argument; the Apoſtle introduces it with excuſing his writing upon this ſubject, ſince he knew how forward they were of their own ac-

cord, and how much their zeal had provoked and ſtirred up others to be liberal: but then from this very circumſtance he juſtifies his application to them, and urges them in a very powerful manner to make good their fair promiſes, leſt haply if they ſhould after all be found unprepared at his coming, both he and they ſhould be *aſhamed* in their *confident boaſting*. I ſhould not have taken notice of this argument made uſe of by the Apoſtle to ſtir up the Corinthians' charity, which is not indeed founded on the nature of the good work itſelf, or in the promiſes of the Goſpel, but for the ſake of obſerving to you, that it is not only lawful, but laudable, to make the natural paſſions and inclinations of men ſubſervient to the cauſe of virtue and religion; that it is no way unbecoming a preacher of the Goſpel to apply to that ſenſe of ſhame, to that love of credit and good report, which God has implanted in men, to be perpetual incitements to actions virtuous and praiſeworthy. Theſe motives however muſt be kept in their proper place; we may recommend, but they cannot make a duty; the ground of our obedience lies deeper. The honour of God, the good of our brethren, the care of our own happineſs, are the ſprings from whence all duties flow; and though we may conſider theſe as diſtinct heads, yet they always unite in one ſtream, and run together without diviſion: for whilſt we do good to others, we do honour to God, and take the beſt care of ourſelves: and the honour we have for God will as naturally ſhew forth itſelf in the love of the brotherhood, as it will certainly end in our own happineſs.

From theſe principles the Apoſtle exhorts the Corinthians to ſet forward the charity propoſed to them with a liberal hand, aſſuring them, that it would be abundant to the honour and glory of God, through many thankſgivings; that it would ſupply the wants of the ſaints; and that it would return to them in bleſſings, through the prayers that would be offered to God in their behalf.

We muſt not imagine that theſe principles are peculiar to works of charity and beneficence, for they really extend to all parts of our duty; all religion is derived from them; and there is nothing we are bound to, but as it relates either to the honour of God, or the good of mankind, or our own welfare.

In treating therefore of this ſubject, I ſhall conſider,

Firſt, How theſe principles influence religion in general.

Secondly, How plainly and evidently they lead us to works of charity and mercy.

Thirdly, I will ſhew you how effectually they do conſpire to recommend to us that good work, for the promoting of which we are this day met together in the preſence of God.

Firſt then, let us conſider how theſe principles influence religion in general.

Man is a religious creature, in conſequence of his being a rational one; our obligations to do right ariſe from the natural powers with which we are endowed, to diſtinguiſh between right and wrong; and when in any caſe, in which we are concerned to act, our reaſon diſcovers to us what is right, it at the

ſame time unavoidably fixes our duty and obligation.

It is but too plain, that to know and feel the obligations we are under, is one thing, and to comply with them in practice, is another; all wilful ſinners feel the obligations they are under to do right, and yet are carried by other inducements, which have greater force upon their minds, to do wrong; and where men comply with their duty, it is not always, nay, it is perhaps but rarely, for the ſake of that natural light of reaſon only, which creates the duty; but for other reaſons, which affect their own intereſt and convenience. And this ſhews the difference between the principles, and the mere motives of religion.

A rational mind ought eſpecially to be influenced by the power of reaſon; and if we could ſeparate men from the corrupt paſſions and affections which hang about them, the ſame light of reaſon which ſhews them their duty would ſufficiently move and influence their wills to obedience; in which caſe the principles and the motives of religion would be exactly the ſame; and the act of obedience would be ſincere and pure, and of the ſame kind with the light of reaſon from which it flows. Such obedience as this is in the higheſt degree rational and religious; and though laws, both human and divine, are guarded with hopes and fears, yet the workings of ſuch hopes and fears cannot add to the religion of ſuch obedience; unleſs you ſuppoſe that there is more religion in being moved by our own paſſions, than in being conducted by the clear light of our reaſon and underſtanding.

When once a man has attained to the knowledge of God, and of the relation he bears to him, and feels the natural obligations from thence ariſing to love, honour, and obey his Maker; though other conſiderations may come in with good effect to incline his will to his duty, yet no other conſiderations can add to his obligations, or make the duty of obedience more a duty, or more an act of true religion, than it was before: for he who honours and obeys God, becauſe he knows that God ought to be honoured and obeyed by him, his creature and his ſervant, acts upon as high and as true a principle of religion, as a rational mind is capable of.

The ſecond principle of duty, which is the love of our neighbour, may be conſidered in two views, either as it reſults from the common relation which all men bear to God, or from the relation which men bear to each other: in the firſt view, to love our neighbour is properly a religious act, and part of the duty we owe to God; and he knows but little of God and his attributes, who cannot from thence diſcern, that to do good to our fellow-creatures is an acceptable part of obedience to him; that to vex, injure, and oppreſs them, is injurious to him, the common Father and Maker of all men.

But beſides this, could we ſuppoſe men to forget God, without forgetting themſelves, and loſing the reaſon with which they are endowed; the very light of reaſon, aſſiſted by the natural faculty of what is right and wrong, would oblige men to uſe each other with juſtice, and with tenderneſs: for reaſon itſelf is a law to a reaſonable mind: and in

the preſent caſe, you muſt either ſay, that it would be altogether as reaſonable an act in a man, who believes not in God, to murder an innocent child, as to nouriſh and ſupport it; or you muſt allow that reaſon alone in this caſe makes a difference, and creates ſuch an obligation as a reaſonable mind muſt ever be ſenſible of, and inclined to follow. I would not call this religious obedience; but it is obedience to the law of our own minds: and could we be ſo ſtupid as to forget the hand which planted this law in our hearts, yet whilſt the law itſelf lives in us; that is, as long as we continue to have reaſon and ſenſe, ſo long ſhall we feel the obligations we are under in obedience to it; ſo long ſhall we be diſſatisfied with ourſelves for acting contrary to what we ſee, and know, and feel to be right and becoming.

But join theſe two conſiderations together, and you ſee into the very ſource of all the obligations a man can be under to do good to his fellow-creatures. We can conſider men only as they ſtand related to us, or as they and we ſtand equally related to God, our common father; and under theſe views we may diſcover whatever we owe to man for his own ſake, or for the ſake of God who made him; and diſcern the whole compaſs of our duty with reſpect to the ſecond great branch of it, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.*

Let us then proceed to the third thing, viz. the love of ourſelves, and our own happineſs; and conſider how far this will and ought to influence our religious obedience.

It is very evident from the common and univer-

ſal ſenſe of mankind, that the deſires of life and happineſs are impreſſions which come from the Author of nature; and conſequently that to follow theſe impreſſions, and to act in purſuance of them, is according to nature, and agreeable to the will of God, the author of them. It is reaſonable for a man to be concerned for his own happineſs; and ſince the will of God can never contradict right reaſon, it is conſonant to the divine will for men to act upon this principle, the care of themſelves and of their own welfare. This concern for our own happineſs is a very ſtrong principle of action in us, and when duly purſued, within its proper bounds, a very juſtifiable one; and though in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech it cannot be termed a principle of religion, becauſe the reaſon of our own religious obedience is not to be reſolved into ſelf-love; yet, conſidering the ſtrict union which God has made between our happineſs and our duty, the concern for our own happineſs, when duly regulated, will always be a powerful principle of action in matters of religion.

The natural care and concern therefore which all men have for themſelves and their own happineſs, is the great ſource from which the motives of religion are deduced: and the reaſon why this natural principle of action does often furniſh very powerful motives to the cauſe of vice and irreligion, is no other than this; that men often, through the corruption of their affections, judge amiſs of their happineſs, and purſue thoſe things as pleaſant and profitable, which are really pernicious and deſtructive. In which caſe men are not to be blamed for purſuing their own happineſs, but for the corruption of

their hearts, which makes them place their happineſs in the things the moſt contrary to it. For ſince God made man to be happy, and has endowed him with reaſon, to diſcern wherein his true happineſs does conſiſt, it muſt needs be agreeable to the will of God, that man ſhould endeavour to attain that happineſs for which he was intended. The conſequence of which is, that it is no blemiſh to our obedience, that we are moved by the conſiderations of that happineſs, which God has made to be the reward of it.

To judge rightly therefore of the motives upon which men act in their religious concerns, we muſt judge of the nature of the happineſs they propoſe to themſelves; and this, I think, we may admit as a rule in this caſe; that as long as men ſeek after that happineſs which is natural and proper, and intended for them by God, ſo long they act upon motives agreeable to the will of God.

The happineſs in which men are capable of having any ſhare, or for which they have any deſires, is either that which belongs to this world, or that which belongs to the world to come. That future rewards are proper incitements to virtue and religion, is plain from hence; that God has propoſed them as ſuch, and ſent his only and well-beloved Son into the world, to bring *life and immortality to light through the Goſpel.* But theſe future rewards do not alter the nature of religion, or give God a better title to our obedience than he had before; they contain not the reaſons and evidences of the obligations we were under to the ſupreme Creator, but they are added as proper movements to the will

and affections of men, and to raiſe their minds above the temptations of this world, which ſo eaſily beſet them. The particular rewards promiſed in the Goſpel being matter of divine revelation, to reject them, is want of faith; to admit them, is an act of religion towards God, with reſpect to that faith, which is the foundation of our receiving them; but with reſpect to the influence of the rewards themſelves, they do not make any thing to be a religious duty, which is not ſo in itſelf; they do not make any thing ceaſe to be religion, which was religion before.

As to the happineſs of this preſent life, we can, I think, as little queſtion whether God intended men to be happy here, as we can, whether he intends them to be happy hereafter: the natural deſires of men after this happineſs, the neceſſary connection between virtue and happineſs, and the goodneſs of God towards his creatures, will not permit us to make any doubt of it: and if God intended men for happineſs here, to purſue this happineſs by the moſt juſtifiable means, *i. e.* by the means of virtue and religion, muſt needs be agreeable to his holy will; and conſequently the proſpect of the peace and tranquillity of this life is a proper motive to religion.

Under the old law we find the promiſes of this life were expreſsly made to religious obedience by God himſelf; a demonſtration, I think, that the motives of this world are not in their own nature deſtructive of religious obedience. Long life, temporal peace and proſperity in the flouriſhing condition of their country, fruitful ſeaſons, and plentiful

harveſts, are inducements always propoſed to the Jews to keep the commandments: nor may we pretend to ſay, that theſe promiſes were peculiar, and only proper to the Jews, unleſs we think that it was peculiar to the Jews to deſire long life, proſperity, and plenty: for motives founded in natural deſires muſt be as extenſive as the deſires themſelves; and having been propounded by God as motives of religion to one nation, it ſhews they are proper for all. The Jews had indeed an expreſs promiſe of temporal felicity, if they continued obedient: other nations, if they believe God to be the governor of the world, muſt have aſſurance of the like reward; for to ſuppoſe God to govern the world, infers his care of a religious obedient people: and therefore our Saviour gives it as an inſtance of want of faith, where men diſtruſt the goodneſs of God in providing for them, whilſt they endeavour to ſerve him. But further; even under the Goſpel we are aſſured, that *godlineſs has the promiſes of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

To encourage ourſelves therefore in our duty and obedience, with the hopes that God will reward us here with life, health, and proſperity, is no blemiſh to our religion; but indeed is an act of faith in God, as governor of the world; and a proper inducement to make us, in all we ſay or do, to look up to him who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, both in this life and in the next.

Our Saviour reckons but two general heads of religion, the *love of God*, and the *love of our neighbour*; but the ſecond of theſe plainly infers another, the love of ourſelves; for ſince we are to love our

neighbour as ourſelves, it is evident that we may and ought to love ourſelves. A corrupt and irreligious affection can be no rule of duty; and if we are bound to love others according to the meaſure of the love we have for ourſelves, it is evident at leaſt that we may, conſiſtently with the nature of religion, love ourſelves as much as we are bound to love others: and ſince it is our duty to promote the preſent eaſe, and happineſs, and proſperity of our neighbours, it muſt be agreeable to the mind of our bleſſed Saviour, that we ſhould take the ſame care of ourſelves: and if this be a lawful care, it muſt needs be allowed, that it is never better employed than when it makes us obedient towards God, in hopes of his favour and protection.

Having now, if not too largely, yet at leaſt as far as the preſent occaſion will give leave, endeavoured to clear the firſt thing propoſed; I ſhall proceed to the ſecond; namely,

How plainly and evidently theſe principles lead us to works of charity and mercy.

He that oppreſſeth the poor, ſays the wiſe King of Iſrael, *reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him, hath mercy on the poor.*

The poor are the creatures of God, not only as they are men, but alſo as they are poor men: the different orders and degrees of men are from the hand of God; and to deſpiſe or oppreſs a man for being what God has thought fit to make him, is to reproach God: and if we have a true honour for God, the common Father of both rich and poor, it will diſpoſe us to regard even the meaneſt of his children. The rich are the elder brothers of the

world; and as they ſhare the eſtate of it among them, ſo is it incumbent on them to provide for the neceſſities of the reſt of the family; which they can hardly neglect without renouncing the common relation they have to one and the ſame parent; ſo that to ſhew mercy to the poor is a direct way of paying honour to God.

Beſides, works of mercy redound to the honour of God, through the praiſes and thankſgivings of thoſe who feel the comfort and relief of them. The charity of the rich, thrown into the lap of the poor, aſcends up in more delightful ſtreams than the incenſe of the altar, and returns again in ſhowers of bleſſings upon the head of the liberal. The unexpected relief which the indigent meet with, naturally creates in them a great ſenſe of Providence, and of the care of God over his creatures; it raiſes them to a thankful acknowledgment of his regard towards them, and diſpoſes them to a religious dependence on him in the midſt of all their diſtreſs. So that in this ſenſe alſo works of charity tend to the honour of God, as they promote a true ſenſe of religion in the world.

That the good and welfare of men are directly conſulted by the charitable hand, is too plain a caſe to admit of any proof: and great pity it is, that there is any room to doubt whether this end be always attained by the liberality of well-diſpoſed perſons: but ſo it is, that too great a part of what is given in charity in this rich and populous city, inſtead of being a ſupply to the want of ſaints, is the nouriſhment of idle and debauched vagabonds: a caſe the more to be lamented, becauſe the frequent

impoſtures of this kind make good people diſtruſtful of all who aſk for charity, and ſometimes bring great difficulties upon the well-deſerving poor. Under theſe circumſtances, we can no otherwiſe anſwer this end of charity, the doing good to others, than by taking ſome care to place our charity right; and to diſtinguiſh between the truly needy, and the idle beggar, who lies in wait to intercept charity, and to divert the maintenance of the more deſerving. But however we may be impoſed on in this reſpect, yet in that which follows, I truſt there is no fear of being deceived; for though the wicked receiver of charity ſhall anſwer for his guile and hypocriſy, yet the liberality of the giver ſhall not go unrewarded: for,

Thirdly, By works of mercy and charity, we make the beſt proviſion for our own preſent and future happineſs. This may be concluded by direct inference from what has been already ſaid; for ſince works of mercy have ſo plain a tendency to promote the honour of God, we cannot doubt but that God will reward the love and obedience of ſuch as take pleaſure therein. Add to this, the expreſs promiſes of the Goſpel made to theſe good works eſpecially; inſomuch that clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirſty, viſiting the ſick and the priſoners in their diſtreſs, are mentioned by our bleſſed Saviour as chief articles of inquiry at the laſt great day; and are put into the ſhort deſcription which St. James has left us of *pure and undefiled religion in the ſight of God*; add to this, I ſay, and we have all the ſecurity that can be deſired or expected.

The final retribution for this, and every other work, muſt be expected from the juſtice of God, in that day in which he hath appointed to judge the world; but this hinders not but that we may juſtly hope for part of our reward in this life. In the chapter of the text, the Apoſtle encourages the Corinthians to liberality, by teaching them to expect a return for it from God, in the increaſe of their ſtores, and a plentiful harveſt of the good fruits of the earth: this reward he earneſtly prays they may have:—*He that miniſtereth ſeed to the ſower, both miniſter bread for your food, and multiply your ſeed ſown.* The Apoſtle wrote to Chriſtians, and doubtleſs he made uſe of none but Chriſtian motives; and upon his authority we may venture to promiſe to the charitable Chriſtian a ſuitable reward, as well in the bleſſings of this life, as of that which is to come. But it is time to proceed to the laſt thing propoſed:

To ſhew how effectually theſe conſiderations conſpire to recommend to us that good work, for promoting of which we are this day met together in the fear of God.

If to ſupply the temporal wants of the brethren be a work redounding to the honour of God; behold theſe numerous objects before you, all wearing the livery of charity, not as a badge of ſervitude to any earthly maſter, but as a token that they and their benefactors are equally ſervants to God; nor are their preſent wants and neceſſities the only concern of this pious inſtitution; but a foundation is laid for the conſtant ſupport of them and their families, by training them up, and diſpoſing of them to ſuch uſeful employments as may yield them a

comfortable maintenance for their lives; ſo that this charity, like the widow's cruſe, will always recruit itſelf; and bread to be earned by theſe many hands, in time to come, ſhall be placed to the liberal man's account, as the growth and product of his beneficence, and be a memorial of his good works daily renewed and offered up in the ſight of God.

But the ſupplying the temporal wants of the poor is not the only, nor the chief end of theſe inſtitutions; they have another view, which more directly regards the honour and glory of God; the inſtructing of youth in the principles of virtue and religion, and teaching them to know God betimes, and the obedience owing to him. And if providing for the temporal wants of the poor ſhall be eſteemed an honour paid to God, how much more ſhall this charity be ſo eſteemed, which is dedicated expreſsly to that end? the chief buſineſs of which is, to fill the mouths of babes and ſucklings with the praiſes of God, a ſacrifice which he will not deſpiſe. To inſtruct undiſciplined youth in the principles of faith and obedience, what is it but to extend the dominion of God over his creatures; to *turn the hearts of the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt*, and to *make ready a people prepared for the Lord*; to conquer the powers of darkneſs, like good ſoldiers of Chriſt; and to lay up in ſtore for ourſelves more than the conqueror's crown? But, ſecondly,

The argument has the ſame advantage with reſpect to the good of thoſe who are the immediate objects of this charity: it has this in common with other charities, that it is a ſupply for the wants of the poor; it has this above many others, that it is a

proviſion againſt future wants; but its chief glory is, that it is a proviſion not only for the preſent comforts of this life, but alſo for the happineſs of that life which is eternal; by reſcuing the poor from that contagion of vice to which they are ſo fatally expoſed, for want of due inſtructions in their youth: it is this want which has filled the ſtreets with idle vagabonds and beggars; many of whom know nothing of *the Lord who bought them*, except only his name; nor had they known that, but merely for the uſe of it in the common forms of begging. Laſtly,

As to yourſelves, the encouragers, the ſupporters of this good work, God is your reward: and as the charity you are engaged in has all the marks of a juſt regard to the honour of God, and of a tender and Chriſtian concern for the preſent and future happineſs of your brethren; ſo need you not doubt, but that the promiſes of the Goſpel ſhall be juſtified unto you, both in this life, and in that which is to come. Go on therefore, and faint not; if your work be attended with difficulties, they ſhall ſerve only to increaſe your reward. Let it be the care on your part, *that your good be not evil ſpoken of*; and if offences come, (and they muſt needs come,) *wo to them by whom they come.*

But that this charity may in all reſpects be above reproach, and anſwer the ends propoſed by the liberal benefactors, I earneſtly recommend it to thoſe who have the immediate care of theſe children, to be watchful over their behaviour, and conſtant and diligent in the diſcharge of their own duty. The ſucceſs of this charity depends in great meaſure upon their fidelity: men of fortune and buſineſs in

the world cannot attend ſo cloſely as to obſerve every thing that paſſes; this care therefore muſt reſt upon thoſe, who have more immediately the inſpection of theſe ſchools. And let them remember, that they receive the pay of charity; and that they cannot neglect their duty, without adding this aggravation to their crime, the abuſe of one of the nobleſt charities of this age.

And now, may that God, whoſe honour you are labouring to promote, whoſe children theſe are, who are ſupported and inſtructed by your charity, proſper this work in your hands; and raiſe up freſh ſupplies for the adminiſtration of this ſervice: may he miniſter bread for your food, and multiply your ſeed ſown, and increaſe the fruits of your righteouſneſs. *To him*, &c.

DISCOURSE XIV.

JUDGES ii. 7.

And the people ſerved the Lord all the days of Joſhua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joſhua, who had ſeen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Iſrael.

THUS far all is well: God had been extremely gracious and merciful to Iſrael; and thoſe who had ſeen his wonders, and had felt the miſeries from which he had delivered them, retained a grateful remembrance of his goodneſs. But the caſe quickly altered: no ſooner were the men, who had ſeen the works of the Lord, *gathered unto their fathers*, but *there aroſe another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Iſrael: and the children of Iſrael did evil in the ſight of the Lord.* The effects of their departing from God their deliverer are deſcribed at the 14th verſe. *And the anger of the Lord was hot againſt Iſrael, and he delivered them into the hands of the ſpoilers that ſpoiled them, and he ſold them into the hands of their enemies round about, ſo that they could not any longer ſtand before their enemies.*

You have now the caſe of the Iſraelites fully be-

fore you. I wiſh it was a ſingular caſe, and that the reſt of the people of God ſtood clear from the like imputation. If they do, happy are they; if they do not, they have great reaſon to fear, that the ſame cauſe will produce the ſame effect; and that they likewiſe ſhall be ſold into the hands of their enemies.

It is but a melancholy reflection to think, that the miſbehaviour here charged upon the people of Iſrael, is almoſt a natural effect of the preſent degenerate and corrupted ſtate of nature: we receive benefits with great warmth and zeal of gratitude, and we poſſeſs and enjoy them with great coldneſs and indifference; and too often with a total forgetfulneſs of the hand that beſtowed them. This temper diſcovers itſelf in the common affairs of life, and the mutual intercourſe that men have with men. Thoſe, who are able to help us, are courted and careſſed as long as we want their aſſiſtance; are honoured and reverenced whilſt they afford it; and as ſoon as they have made us happy, we begin to think they did us but juſtice, they gave us only what we had a right to; and the acknowledgments due to the benefactor are paid to our own merit and deſert. By theſe ſteps our ſucceſs in the world, owing perhaps entirely to the partiality our friends had for us, and which ought to make us humble and thankful, leads us to two odious vices, very incident to human nature, though very unbecoming the condition of it, pride and ingratitude.

Public bleſſings make ſtill leſs impreſſion on the minds of men than private benefactions. Very few think of any obligation lying upon themſelves for

the good they enjoy in common with their neighbours. The peace and quiet ſecurity procured by the care and protection of government, is rarely reflected on as creating any debt of gratitude to thoſe who watch for us. When tribute is demanded by thoſe to whom tribute is due, men are apt to conſider what they pay as ſo much loſt out of their property: whereas in truth no part of our fortune makes a better return to us, than that which is beſtowed to ſecure the whole, and to maintain peace and tranquillity in our days.

What miſchief this temper of ingratitude produces in private and in public life, is but too manifeſt. Every man almoſt has his complaint againſt ſomebody, who has repaid his good offices with neglect and contempt, perhaps too with injuries; and in public life one would imagine that liberty was miſtaken for a right to abuſe the government; and that the dignity of a free ſtate conſiſted in acting without regard or reverence to thoſe who are at the head of it.

But the effects of this perverſe diſpoſition acting in the affairs of this life, and among ourſelves, are matters of light complaint, compared with its influence in matters of religion. We have all one great Friend, if we would acknowledge him; one great Governor, if we would regard him. But we are too apt to deal with God as we do with the reſt of our friends; we intreat, we beg for his aſſiſtance, when we are in diſtreſs; and when we are relieved, we think but little of him.

The common bleſſings of Providence are received and enjoyed by multitudes, who ſeldom or

never think of the hand that ſupplies their wants. The former and the latter rain, and the plentiful ſeaſons, are aſcribed to I know not what courſe of natural cauſes: but ſuch cauſes are meant, to which no thanks are due; and this notion, contrary to reaſon and true philoſophy, is the more readily embraced, becauſe it furniſhes men with the good things of the world, and lays them under no obligations to the Author of them. St. Paul ſays, that God at no time *left himſelf without witneſs, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons, filling our hearts with food and gladneſs.* But how has this evidence been attended to? The conſtant and regular ſupply of our neceſſities makes us imagine that we have a right to them by preſcription, and that we have a property in them as children of the earth: or, that if any thing is owing to wiſdom, it is to our own wiſdom, in managing the ground and the ſeaſons to the beſt advantage. And thus forgetting the Author of every good gift, and transferring the honour due to him to ourſelves, we do, in the language of the Prophet, *ſacrifice unto our net, and burn incenſe to our drag, becauſe by them our portion is fat, and our meat plenteous*, Hab. i. 16.

But however theſe common bleſſings, which come to all without diſtinction, are neglected and overlooked, one would imagine that ſignal deliverances wrought in favour of any people, and in which the arm of the Lord is made bare, and viſible to every eye, ſhould be had in perpetual remembrance, and be tranſmitted with ſentiments of gratitude, honour, and religion to the lateſt poſterity.

But the caſe is far otherwiſe!

The hiſtory of the Jews, a people under the peculiar and viſible government of Providence, is a ſeries of rebellions and revolts againſt God, who had frequently and miraculouſly delivered them from the hands of their enemies. In their ſtory the counſels of God with reſpect to them and their neighbours are laid open; and we ſee plainly the reſentment of God's juſtice againſt a rebellious people, and in what manner he raiſed the nations round about them to puniſh and diſtreſs them. From their example we may learn to reckon with ourſelves; and, by conſidering our own caſe, know what to fear, and what to hope, from the juſtice and mercy of God: for the ways of Providence are unalterable, and the ſame wiſdom and juſtice which governed the Jews, governs all the people of the world. The purpoſes of God are the ſame towards all nations, though not ſo diſcernible and manifeſt as in the hiſtory of the people of Iſrael. Profane hiſtory preſents us many inſtances of nations ſubdued under the hand of their enemies, and fallen from a ſtate of pride and ſovereignty to the miſerable condition of ſlavery and captivity. There the hiſtory leaves us. It acquaints us with the facts, and the politicians of the world are buſied in aſſigning cauſes for the ſurpriſing changes that have been in the nations. Some diſcern great wiſdom and conduct on the ſide of the conquerors, and great miſtakes and ill management on the ſide of the unfortunate; and all agree to aſcribe, in moſt caſes, the events and ſucceſſes of war to the number and bravery of the troops. But look into the ſacred hiſtory, where the counſels of God are diſplayed by his

holy Prophets, there will you ſee a plain reaſon, why the favourite nation, delivered moſt wonderfully and miraculouſly from the ſlavery of Egypt, was ſold again into ſlavery to the Philiſtines and other heathen nations around them. Had this ſtory been told in the common way of hiſtory, we ſhould have thought this people extremely weak or unfortunate, in that they had no ſooner eſcaped out of the hands of the great and powerful kings of Egypt, but they became vaſſals and bondſmen to the little princes bordering upon Canaan. But ſee the truth of the caſe: they became extremely unfortunate, becauſe they were extremely wicked; their proſperity was their ruin, as it made them forget the Lord that bought them. And the ſtrength, which they relied on as their ſecurity, betrayed them to their deſtruction; for they had to deal with him, *who ſaveth not kings by the multitude of an hoſt, nor giveth the battle to the ſtrong.*

Let no man be ſo weak as to imagine that this method of Providence was peculiar and confined to the Jews, and that other nations were left to follow their own imaginations, and that God regarded them not; for the contrary appears in the ſame ſacred hiſtory, in which we have the account of the Jewiſh nation. The counſels of God were not indeed ſo manifeſtly declared to other nations by prophets and meſſengers from God; but the methods of juſtice were the ſame to all, and the nations were left to reaſon and conſcience, thoſe great lights given to all alike, to interpret the conduct of Providence with reſpect to themſelves. Were Sodom and Gomorrah deſtroyed by chance? No: it was by a fire

from heaven, commiſſioned to extirpate a wicked and profane people. Were the Canaanites overpowered by the arms of Iſrael? Certainly not: but God, who had waited in patience and forbearance till the meaſure of their iniquity was full, delivered them up to deſtruction. Inquire what became of the great monarchies of Aſſyria, Babylon, and Egypt: you may ſee their doom foretold by the prophets. They were to be deſtroyed for their great idolatry and corruption: and the prophecies have been ſo remarkably fulfilled, that they are a ſtanding leſſon of inſtruction to all nations, who have eyes to ſee, and hearts to underſtand. Thus too it fared at laſt with the favourite people of the Jews: they were often puniſhed in mercy, and ſuffered to be miſerable, that they might become better. They were from time to time admoniſhed by the prophets; and at laſt God ſent his Son to them; him they ſlew and hanged on a tree; and having filled up the meaſure of their iniquity, vengeance purſued them; and ſuch vengeance as aſtoniſhed the world, and does yet aſtoniſh it; for *there is no miſery like their miſery.*

Final puniſhments, whereby nations are entirely rooted out, are of uſe to us as examples and warnings to flee from the wrath to come; otherwiſe they can do us no ſervice: for ſhould we ever fall into ſo wretched a condition as to call down ſuch judgments on our head, who can deliver us from the hand of the living God? But other judgments, how ſharp and ſevere ſoever they may be, are the effects of mercy, and intended for our correction. When ancient and late deliverances are forgotten, and have

no effect upon the mind; when the voice of God ſpeaking in his law, by his prophets, and by the miniſters of his word, is no longer attended to; nothing remains but to apply ſharper remedies, or to permit the people to fill up the full meaſure of their iniquities, and to periſh in their ſins. It is mercy to prevent this fatal evil, how corroding ſoever the means, made uſe of by mercy, may prove. The perverſeneſs and corruption of men's hearts juſtify the goodneſs and equity of God in inflicting ſuch puniſhments, and they muſt blame themſelves for not attending to the gentler and the kinder calls of Providence.

Perhaps there may be no great occaſion to juſtify before you the ways of God towards the children of Iſrael; we are all of one opinion to condemn their perverſeneſs and ingratitude: ſo much eaſier is it to detect the faults of others, than to ſee and acknowledge our own!

But are we innocent from this great offence?

Let us conſider our own caſe: and ſurely we have great reaſon to conſider it, now the enemies of our religion and liberty appear with triumph in our land, and are in poſſeſſion of one ancient and powerful kingdom united to the crown of England.

Our unhappy diviſions in civil matters I chooſe to paſs over in ſilence at this time and place; for I mean no reproach to any man. And without doubt our conduct towards God, and our regard to his holy religion, is the firſt and moſt intereſting conſideration now before us.

It is well known that the people of Iſrael were the choſen, the peculiar people of God; and diſtin-

guiſhed from the reſt of the nations by a ſpecial Providence directing them and their affairs. If you conſider this as the effect of partiality, and a weak fondneſs for one ſet of men more than another, you injure the attributes of God, who acts by wiſdom and juſtice in all his dealings, and is no reſpecter of perſons. The houſe of Abraham was called for the ſake of true religion; to preſerve the knowledge of the one God among themſelves, to propagate it among the nations, and to prepare the way for introducing into the world, under proper circumſtances, that ſeed, in which all the nations of the earth were to be bleſſed. As they were choſen for theſe great purpoſes, ſo whenever they acted contrary to them, they ceaſed to be the choſen people, and were treated as enemies and rebels.

We are apt enough to boaſt of the purity of our religion, and our reformation from the errors and corruptions of the church of Rome; and to flatter ourſelves that we alſo are a peculiar people of God, and ſet up by Providence to be the bulwark of the Proteſtant religion. And indeed, if we judge from the many deliverances we have had, when our religion and our liberties were in utmoſt danger, we have great reaſon to acknowledge the care and protection of Heaven over us. But remember ſtill that we too are choſen to profeſs and maintain the truth of God's holy Goſpel, and to bear our teſtimony againſt the corruptions, which have prevailed over a great part of the Chriſtian world. If, inſtead of acting up to this part aſſigned us by Providence, we grow careleſs and indifferent to our holy profeſſion, and ſuffer a ſpirit of irreligion to prevail over the

nation, we forfeit our title to God's protection; we are no longer the choſen people, and muſt expect to be treated as enemies and deſerters.

Our preſent ſituation is attended with fears and uneaſy apprehenſions; and if we look back and conſider from whence we are fallen, we may ſee but too much reaſon to ſuſpect that our fears are well grounded. How has this nation been bleſſed with the light of the Goſpel! How wonderfully and how often has it been reſcued from danger, when to human appearance there was no help at hand! Scarcely had the Reformation taken root among us, but a Popiſh Queen, made cruel by bigotry and ſuperſtition, aſcended the throne, and applied the only ſtrong argument of Popery, fire and faggot, to extinguiſh the light that was breaking in upon us. Not only the civil powers of this country were in the hands that meant to deſtroy the Reformation, but they were ſupported and united to the powers of Spain, whoſe prince was become a partner of the throne of England; who lived to deſtroy (not in this country, bleſſed be God, but in his own dominions) thouſands and tens of thouſands on account of religion. Such were the powers under which the Reformation here, ſtill in its infancy, was to ſtruggle. It is painful to think of the miſeries of that time; but think of them we ought, and bleſs God for the noble examples of conſtancy and Chriſtian courage, left by thoſe whom he raiſed up to bear teſtimony, at the expence of their lives, to the truth of his religion. Had this reign been long and proſperous, it is highly probable that Philip of Spain had left this country in the ſame condition he left his own:

where the Inquiſition rules with lordly and uncontrollable power over the conſciences and over the fortunes of the people. But God, in whoſe hands are the iſſues of life and death, made way for a Proteſtant Princeſs to aſcend the throne; in whoſe long and glorious reign the Reformation took deep root, and the eſtabliſhment of this national church was perfected. A work of great wiſdom and piety, and ſo eſteemed by the Proteſtant churches abroad, however unhappily ſome among ourſelves have forſaken her communion.

The reign of this glorious Princeſs was almoſt a continual ſcene of deliverances from foreign invaſions, and diſturbances at home. And notwithſtanding ſhe was diſtreſſed on every ſide, by bulls and curſes from Rome, by armadas from Spain, by rebellions in England and Ireland, ſhe left this church and nation in peace and ſecurity: ſo wonderfully did the hand of God appear in our preſervation.

Peace and ſecurity under a weak government which ſucceeded, produced by degrees a corruption in principles and manners, which ended at laſt in the ruin of this church and nation, and the deſtruction of a virtuous Prince, worthy of a far better fate. With him fell all our hopes of order and government in church and ſtate; anarchy and confuſion uſurped the throne; and religion was ſo divided into an almoſt infinite number of diſagreeing ſects, that the true one could hardly be found in the crowd.

But whilſt we are under this thick cloud, He, who can bring light out of darkneſs, did, againſt all the hopes of human probability, reſtore us to our

happy conſtitution in church and ſtate; not by force of arms, or the power of princes, but by overruling the paſſions of men; ſo that even they became inſtruments in reſtoring theſe bleſſings, who had been greatly concerned in deſtroying them.

It will be wronging the nation to ſay, that this deliverance at the Reſtoration was not received with great joy and pleaſure. The joy indeed was exceſſive; and, as the caſe too often happens, left little room for ſober and ſerious reflections. The hearts of men being ſet open to the impreſſions and tranſports of joy, ſoon grew ſenſual; and the proſperity of the nation broke out into luxury, and into all the vices which naturally attend it. The ſenſes of religion decayed; and the very appearances of it were ſuſpected, as a remnant of the hypocriſy with which the late times had been charged. And if we may judge by the performances of the ſtage, which are formed to the taſte of the people, there never was a time when lewdneſs, irreligion, and profaneneſs were heard with more patience.

But let us conſider, what fruit the nation had of theſe things. I ſhall paſs over all the calamities of that time, which were many, and mention only that, which is the cauſe and foundation of all we fear at preſent. In the next reign then, ſee Popery once more exalted to the throne of England, and working to deſtroy the religion and liberties of the people; not by art and cunning, and leiſurely ſteps, but by open and avowed attempts upon our conſtitution. The laws for defence of our religion were ſilenced by a diſpenſing power; Papiſts were placed on the bench, on the ſeat of judgment, and at the head of

colleges in our univerſities. Men's hearts ſunk for fear, and the torrent ſeemed to carry all before it. One happy effect indeed it had; it awakened men to a ſober ſenſe of themſelves and their condition. When they were put in fear, they ſoon found themſelves to be but men; and they did the only reaſonable thing they could do, apply to God for protection. The zeal of the nation at that time, for the pure uncorrupted doctrines of the Goſpel, in oppoſition to the errors of Popery, was perhaps greater than ever it had been from the days of the Reformation. The paſtors and their flocks were equally animated with a conſtancy and a courage above temptation. And the clergy of the eſtabliſhed church, under all the fears and apprehenſions that daily threatened them, maintained the doctrines of the Reformation, with ſuch learning, ability, and integrity, as did them honour both at home and abroad.

Thus were the hearts of the people turned as the heart of one man: nor was it in vain they ſought the Lord; for, by a wonderful ſeries of providence, he delivered them from their diſtreſs. And we have ſeen for many years the crown upon the head of Proteſtant Princes, the natural guardians of the religion and liberties of this country.

If we have made right uſe of this laſt deliverance, let us fear no change; for God will not forſake us, till we forſake him. But the proſpect before us, the danger that draws near to us, call upon us to act uprightly with ourſelves; and not to deceive our hearts with hopes that God will remember us,

if we have forgot him, and the great things he has done for us.

Our hiſtories will always remind us of the great deliverances this nation has had, and we cannot forget them; nor did the Jews forget the wonders wrought in the land of Egypt, and the redemption of their anceſtors from captivity. The hiſtorical remembrance of the facts they had; and we have it. The charge againſt the Jews, expreſſed frequently by their forgetting God, is the ſame which St. Paul brings againſt the heathen world: *When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations; and their fooliſh heart was darkned.*

Do we ſtand clear of this charge? I wiſh to God we did.

Let not *me* be the accuſer of my nation, but let every man recollect what he has heard, and read, and ſeen, within the compaſs of a few years. Surely the Goſpel of Chriſt Jeſus was never treated with greater malice and contempt, by Jews or Heathens, than it has been in this Chriſtian country. Think not that I am condemning a ſober inquiry into the truth of religion: God forbid. But what ſhall we ſay, for the undiſguiſed profaneneſs, and even blaſphemy, that has ſwarmed from the preſs! Many inſtances might be given; but one can never be forgotten; where the nobleſt and moſt exalted hymn of Chriſtian devotion known to this church, or any church in the world, in which angels and the bleſſed ſpirits above join with us, has been perverted to the higheſt impiety and blaſphemy, that ever

the wickedneſs or malice of man's heart could conceive. This and other crimes of the ſame nature are indeed chargeable on the authors: but how deplorable muſt the ſtate of a nation be, when men find encouragement to provide ſuch entertainment for the public!

Look into common life, not to pry into the ſecret faults of men, but to ſee what is become of that ſenſe of religion, which once animated the people. When Popery was breaking in upon us, our churches were crowded; and unhappy was the man, who by ſickneſs, or any real neceſſity, was prevented in his attendance in the houſe of the Lord. Is it ſo now? Is not Sunday become a day of diverſion to the great ones, and a day of idleneſs and lazineſs to the little ones? And has not this been manifeſtly followed by a great increaſe of great wickedneſs and violence among the lower people? Theft and robbery, which uſed to be ſecret crimes, now appear armed in our ſtreets; and are ſupported by numbers ſtrong enough to defy the power of the magiſtrate. The unruly paſſions of men muſt be governed either by force, or by religion. Force cannot watch at all doors to prevent further miſchief; but religion is a centinel placed in every heart, to guard it againſt wickedneſs; and it is but a natural conſequence for men to grow violent and injurious to others, in proportion as their ſenſe of religion decays.

But amidſt this ruin of virtue and religion, one thing there is, that ſtill may be thought matter of comfort; that the nation is generally averſe to Popery: but it is ſome abatement even to this comfort, to conſider that the fear of Popery is not al-

ways a concern for the purity of the Goſpel, but a fear merely of the powers of a Popiſh church. Thoſe who have the leaſt religion, and are grown wild with notions of liberty, have reaſon to be apprehenſive of eccleſiaſtical courts and inquiſitions under the direction of Popery. But in this there is no virtue or merit; though it may be perhaps an happy circumſtance at preſent, that there is ſomething in Popery, for thoſe to be afraid of who have no regard for religion.

But in the mean time has not Popery been daily getting ground on us, by the artful and unregarded inſinuations of the adverſary; and by applications of another kind, which do indeed but little honour to the converts or the converters? The price, at which a man may ſell the Proteſtant religion, is become almoſt a ſtated and well known ſum; and there are known markets, in which a man may ſell the faith in which he was born and bred. Such new purchaſed proſelytes make no great figure; for this method indeed has no effect, but upon the loweſt people. And conſidering how improper an application this is to the conſcience, there is ground to ſuſpect, that it is made uſe of rather to raiſe recruits againſt a proper time, than in hopes to make real converts. I wiſh they may not ſoon feel the effects of this management ſo long connived at.

But to return to ourſelves: to prevent this, and whatever elſe we may apprehend from the danger and diſpleaſure of God, let us ſeek the Lord in our diſtreſs; and, by acknowledging our own unworthineſs, and the abuſe of former mercies, render ourſelves objects of his goodneſs and forgiveneſs. We

have but too exactly copied the behaviour of the Jews in their days of proſperity; let us learn of them likewiſe in their adverſity, and cry unto God for help againſt our enemies. Let us ſet a due value upon the bleſſings beſtowed on us, and walk worthy of the light of the Goſpel which has ſhone among us; that our conduct and behaviour may bear teſtimony to the truth which we profeſs.

And as in all the diſpenſations of Providence towards us, it is expected from us, that we ſhould make uſe of the means which God hath put in our power, for our own defence and ſafety; let us on this occaſion with cheerfulneſs, and the hearts of men who truſt in God, be ready to employ our perſons and our fortunes in the defence of our King and country, and the happy conſtitution in church and ſtate, under which we live. Let every man do his part: he who can do leaſt, can pray for the peace of Jeruſalem. Every man may reform one, that is himſelf, and fill up perhaps that number of the righteous, for the ſake of which the city may be ſaved.

In a word, the time calls upon us to be ſerious; to think of God, and of ourſelves; and, according to the advice of the Pſalmiſt, with which I ſhall diſmiſs you, *to ſtand in awe and ſin not, to commune with our own heart, and in our chamber, and be ſtill; to offer the ſacrifice of righteouſneſs, and to put our truſt in the Lord.*

FINIS.